

PREFACE.

THIS work, which has hitherto appeared in two Parts, the first of which ended with the year 1660, is now re-issued complete in one volume.

A good number of extracts have been given by way of illustration, but in the case of the more important authors these are not intended to take the place of the reading of larger portions of their works, and it is hoped that the book will serve as an introduction and a guide to standard English Literature.

It has not been thought desirable to touch upon works which appeared after 1832; it is an expert and reasonable view that the history of the later literature of the nineteenth century—as distinct from the literature itself—cannot be advantageously studied as an educational subject until the lapse of time has enabled a true perspective to be gained.

The responsibility of the authors for the several portions of the work is distributed thus:—Mr. Wyatt is solely responsible for the early period down to 1500, and for that from 1798 to 1832; the years 1500 to 1580 were written by the late Mr. Low, and have been revised—and partly re-written—by Mr. Wyatt; the years 1580 to 1798 stand as Mr. Low left them.

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CHRONOLOGICAL TABLE.

BEFORE THE CONQUEST.—*Approximate Dates of Composition.*¹

About 700. "Beowulf."

Cædmon's Poetry.

Before 735. Bede.

750—800. Cynewulf's Poetry.

Judith.

Abt. 800—1154. A.S. Chronicle.

871—901. Alfred's Translations.

937. *Battle of Brunanburh.*

993. *Battle of Maldon.*

990—1015. Ælfric's Works.

FROM THE CONQUEST TO THE INTRODUCTION OF PRINTING (1477).

[1147. Geoffrey of Monmouth's *Historia Regum
Britanniae.*]

About 1170. *A Moral Ode.*

About 1200. *The Ormulum.*

¹ Before the Conquest it is often exceedingly difficult to assign even an approximate date. From the Conquest to the introduction of printing (1477) the dates given are approximately the dates of composition. From 1477 to 1579 it is stated in each case whether the dates given are those of composition or of publication. Many of these early dates can only be given approximately.

- About 1200. *Layamon's Brut*.
 1200—1250. *Ancren Riwe*.
 A Bestiary.
 After 1250 *Genesis and Exodus*.
 About 1275. *The Owl and the Nightingale*.
 1296—1300. *Havelok the Dane*.
 Before 1300. *King Horn*.
 1298. Robert of Gloucester's *Chronicle*.
 1303. Robert of Bourne's *Handlyng Synne*.
 About 1320. *Cursor Mundi*.
 1338. Robert of Bourne's *Chronicle*.
 1333-52. Minot's War-songs.
 About 1350. *The York and the Towneley Plays*.
 1350-75. "Sir John Mandeville's" *Travels*.
 Sir Gawayn and the Green Knight.
 The Pearl.
 1362. Langland's *Piers the Plowman* (A text).
 1369. Chaucer's *Book of the Duchess*.
 1377. Langland's *Piers the Plowman* (B text).
 About 1378. Barbour's *Bruce*.
 1382. Wyclif's *Translation of the Bible*.
 About 1382. Chaucer's *Troilus and Cressida*.
 1384. " *House of Fame*.
 1385. " *Legend of Good Women*.
 Gower's *Confessio Amantis*.
 1386-91 ? Chaucer's "Canterbury Tales."
 About 1415. Hoccleve's *Governail of Princes*.
 After 1420. Lydgate's *Story of Thebes*.
 1422—1509. *The Paston Letters*.
 1423. James I. of Scotland's *King's Quair*.
 1438. Lydgate's *Falls of Princes*.
 1449. Pecock's *Repressor*.
 1469-70. Malory's *Morte Darthur*.
 After 1470. Fortescue's *Governance of England*.

FROM THE INTRODUCTION OF PRINTING (1477)
TO 1579 A.D.

1477. Lord Rivers's *Dicts and Sayings of the Philosophers* (first book printed in England).
1481. Caxton's *Translation of Reynard the Fox* (printed).
- 1470-80. Henryson's *Moral Fables* (written).
1503. Dunbar's *The Thistle and the Rose* (written).
- About 1506. Hawes' *Pastime of Pleasure* (written).
- Dunbar's *Lament for the Makers* (written).
- Before 1508. Skelton's *Philip Sparrow* (written).
1513. Douglas's *Translation of the Aeneid* (written).
- [1516. More's *Utopia* (Latin). Robinson's translation, 1551.]
- About 1522. Skelton's *Why Come ye not to Court?* (written).
1525. Tyndale's *New Testament* (printed).
- Lord Berners's *Translation of Froissart* (printed).
1531. Sir Thomas Elyot's *Governor* (printed).
1535. Coverdale's *Translation of the Bible* (printed).
- Lyndesay's *Satire of the Three Estates* (written).
- 1534-41. Nicholas Udall's *Roister Doister* (written).
- Before 1542. Wyatt's *Sonnets, Satires, etc.* (written).
1545. Ascham's *Toxophilus* (printed).
- Before 1547. Surrey's *Translation of the Aeneid, etc.* (written).
1549. Latimer's *Sermon on the Ploughers, etc.* (preached).
1557. Tottel's *Miscellany* (printed).
1562. Sackville and Norton's *Gorboduc* (acted).
1563. Googe's *Eclogues, etc.* (printed).
- Mirror for Magistrates*: 2nd edition, containing Sackville's *Induction, etc.*
- 1566-7. Paynter's *Palace of Pleasure* (printed).

1567. Turberville's translations from *Mantuan* and *Ovid* (printed).
 Golding's *Ovid's Metamorphoses* (printed).
 1570. Ascham's *Schoolmaster* (Ascham d. 1568).
 1576. *Paradise of Dainty Devices* (printed).
 Gascoigne's *Steel Glass* (dedicated).
 1577. Holinshed's *Chronicle* (printed).
 1578. Whetstone's *Promos and Cassandra* (printed).
 1579. Gosson's *School of Abuse* (printed).
 North's *Plutarch* (printed).
 Spenser's *Shepherd's Calendar* (printed).
 Lyly's *Euphues* (printed), followed by *Euphues and his England* next year.

FROM 1580 A.D. TO THE DEATH OF ELIZABETH.

- 1580-4. Sidney's *Arcadia*, *Apology for Poetry*, *Astrophel and Stella* (published posthumously).
 1582. Watson's *Hekatompathia*.
 1584-94 (about). Plays of Greene (d. 1592), Lyly (d. 1606), Peele (d. about 1598), Marlowe (d. 1593): Kyd's *Jerónimo* (about 1586).
 1588. The *Martin Marprelate* controversy begins.
 1589. Bacon's first work.
 Nash's pamphlets and novels (about 1580-99).
 1590. Lodge's *Rosalind*.
 Spenser's *Fairy Queen* [Bks. i.-iii.: Bks. iv.-vi, 1596].
 1592. Constable's *Diana*.
 Daniel's *Delia*.
 1593. Shakespeare's *Venus and Adonis* [His dramatic activity extends from about 1590 to a short time before his death in 1616: see table of works with dates on pp. 213, 214].

1594. Hooker's *Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity*, Books i.-iv.
[Book v. in 1597: the rest published posthumously].
Drayton's *Idea*.
1595. Spenser's *Amoretti* and *Epithalamion*.
- 1596-8. Jonson's *Every Man in his Humour* [d. 1637, and continued writing till then].
1597. Bacon's *Essays* (first edition: in final form 1625).
Hall's *Satires*.
1598. Chapman's *Iliad* (finished 1611: *Odyssey* 1614-15).
Hakluyt's *Voyages and Discoveries*.
1600. *England's Helicon*.
1602. Dekker and Marston's *Satiromastix*.

REIGN OF JAMES I., 1603,—1625.

1603. Florio's *Montaigne*.
1605. Bacon's *Advancement of Learning*.
Jonson's *Folpone* [see 1596 above].
- 1607-16. Beaumont and Fletcher's Plays: Fletcher continued to write till his death in 1625.
1609. Shakespeare's *Sonnets* [see 1593 above].
1610. Giles Fletcher's *Christ's Victory*.
1611. *Authorised Version of the Bible*.
1612. Bacon's *Essays* (second edition).
1613. Browne's *Britannia's Pastorals* (finished 1616).
Donne's *Poems* (and others at various dates).
Drayton's *Polyolbion* (finished 1622).
1614. Overbury's *Characters*.
Raleigh's *History of the World*.
1615. Wither's *Shepherd's Hunting*.
Camden's *Annales*.
1616. Webster's *Duchess of Malfi*.
Drummond of Hawthornden's *Poems*.
1620. Bacon's *Novum Organum*.
1621. Burton's *Anatomy of Melancholy*.
1622. Bacon's *Henry VII*.

- 1685-6 Last poems of Waller.
 1687. Last volume of Barrow's theological works.
 Newton's *Principia*.
 1690. Locke's *Essay concerning Human Understanding*.
 1692. Temple's *Essays*.
 1693. First of Congreve's plays.
 1694. Wotton's *Reflections upon Ancient and Modern Learning*.
 1696. Cibber's *Love's Last Shift*.
 1697. Bentley's *Dissertation on the Epistles of Phalaris*.
 Vaubrugh's *Relapse*.
 Evelyn's *Diary* ends [begun in 1641].
 1698. Collier's *Short View of the Immorality and Profaneness of the Stage*.
 Farquhar's *Love and a Bottle*.

THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY.

1700. Dryden's *Fables* [and death].
 Rowe's first play.
 1702. Defoe's *Shortest Way with the Dissenters*.
 1704. Addison's *Campaign*.
 Swift's *Battle of the Books* and *Tale of a Tub* (see p. 491).
 1705. John Philips' *Splendid Shilling*.
 1707. Prior's *Poems*.
 1709. Pope's *Pastorals*.
 Ambrose Phillips' *Pastorals*.
 Addison and Steele's *Tatler* [*Spectator*, 1711].
 1710. Berkeley's *Principles of Human Knowledge*.
 Parnell's *Hermit*.
 1711. Pope's *Essay on Criticism*.
 Swift's *Conduct of the Allies*.
 1712. Pope's *Rape of the Lock* [final form in 1714].
 1713. Addison's *Cato*.
 1714. Gay's *Shepherd's Week*.

1715. Garth's *Claremont*.
Pope's *Homer* (finished 1725).
1719. Defoe's first novel.
1722. Steele's *Conscious Lovers*.
1724. Swift's *Drapier's Letters*.
1725. Ramsay's *Gentle Shepherd*.
1726. Dyer's *Grongar Hill*.
Thomson's *Seasons* (finished 1730).
Swift's *Gulliver's Travels*.
1728. Pope's *Dunciad* [final form, 1742].
1733-7. Pope's *Essays, Imitations of Horace*, etc.
1735. Somerville's *The Chase*.
1736. Butler's *Analogy*.
1737. Green's *The Spleen*.
Shenstone's *Schoolmistress* [final form, 1742].
1738. Johnson's *London*: Pope's 1738.
The Wesleys' Hymns.
1739. Hume's *Treatise of Human Nature*.
1740. Richardson's first novel [*Clarissa*, 1748].
1742-9. Collins' *Poems*.
1742. Fielding's first novel [*Tom Jones*, 1749].
Young's *Night Thoughts* (finished 1744).
1743. Blair's *The Grave*.
1744. Akenside's *Pleasures of Imagination* [final form, 1772].
1747-68. Gray's *Poems* [*Elegy*, 1750].
1748. Smollett's first novel [*Humphry Clinker*, 1771].
Thomson's *Castle of Indolence*.
1749. Bolingbroke's *Idea of a Patriot King*.
Johnson's *Vanity of Human Wishes*.
1754. Hume's *History* (finished 1762).
1755. Johnson's *Dictionary*.
1756. Burke's first writings.
1759. Adam Smith's *Moral Sentiments*.
Sterne's *Tristram Shandy* (finished 1767).

1761. Churchill's *Rosciad*.
 1762. Macpherson's *Ossian*.
 1763. Smart's *Song to David*.
 1764-74. Goldsmith's *Poems* [*Traveller*, 1764].
 1764. Reid's *Inquiry into the Human Mind*.
 Walpole *Castle of Otranto*.
 1765. Percy's *Reliques*.
 1766. Goldsmith's *Vicar of Wakefield*.
 1768. Chatterton's *Poems*.
 1762. 'Junius' begins to write. Robertson's *Charles V*.
 1770. Burke's *Thoughts on the Present Discontents*.
 1773. Goldsmith's *She Stoops to Conquer*.
 1775. Sheridan's *The Rivals* [*School for Scandal*, '77].
 1776. Gibbon's *Decline and Fall* (finished '88).
 Paine's *Common Sense*.
 A. Smith's *Wealth of Nations*.
 1773. Frances Burney's *Evelina*.
 1779. Johnson's *Lives of the Poets*.
 1779-91. Cowper's *Poems* [*The Task*, 1785].
 1780-1819. Crabbe's *Poems* [*The Village*, 1783].
 1783-1880. Blake's *Poems* [*Songs of Innocence*, '89: *Ex-
 perience*, '93].
 1786-95. Burns' *Poems*.
 1787. Bentham's first writings.
 1790. Burke's *Reflections on the French Revolution*.
 1791. Boswell's *Life of Johnson*.
 Paine's *Rights of Man*.
 1793. Rogers' *Pleasures of Memory*.
 1794. Coleridge and Southey's *Fall of Robespierre*.
 Paley's *Evidences*.
 Southey's *Wat Tyler* [*Joan of Arc*, 1796].
 1796. Scott's translation of Bürger's *Wild Huntsman*.
 1797. The *Anti-Jacobin* started.
 1798. Wordsworth and Coleridge's *Lyrical Ballads*.
 Landor's *Gebir*.

1800. Bloomfield's *Farmer's Boy*.
 Coleridge's *Translation of Schiller's Wallenstein*.
 Miss Edgeworth's *Castle Rackrent*.

THE NINETEENTH CENTURY.

1802. *Edinburgh Review* established.
 Scott's *Minstrelsy of the Scottish Border*.
 1803. Campbell's *Poems*.
 1805. Scott's *Lay of the Last Minstrel*.
 1807. Crabbe's *Parish Register*.
 Moore's *Irish Melodies* (Part I.).
 Wordsworth's *Poems*.
 1808. Scott's *Marmion*.
Quarterly Review established.
 1810. Scott's *Lady of the Lake*.
 1811. Austen's *Sense and Sensibility*.
 1812. Byron's *Childe Harold* (Cantos I. and II.).
 Crabbe's *Tales in Verse*.
 J. and H. Smith's *Rejected Addresses*.
 1813. Hogg's *Queen's Wake*.
 Southey made Laureate.
 1814. Scott's *Waverley*.
 Southey's *Roderick, the last of the Goths*.
 Wordsworth's *Excursion*.
 1816. Coleridge's *Christabel*.
 Leigh Hunt's *Story of Rimini*.
 Scott's *Antiquary*.
 Shelley's *Alastor*.
 1817. Coleridge's *Biographia Literaria*.
 Hazlitt's *Characters of Shakespeare's Plays*.
 Moore's *Lalla Rookh*.
 Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*.
 1818. Byron's *Beppo*.
 Hallam's *Europe during the Middle Ages*.

- Keats's *Endymion*.
 Scott's *Heart of Midlothian*.
 1819. Byron's *Don Juan* (Cantos I. and II.).
 Crabbe's *Tales of the Hall*.
 Shelley's *Cenci*.
 1820. Keats's *Hyperion*, *Odes*, *Exc of St. Agnes*, etc.
 Sheridan Knowles's *Virginius*.
 Scott's *Ivanhoe*.
 Shelley's *Prometheus Unbound*.
 1821. De Quincey's *Confessions of an Opium-Eater*.
 Hazlitt's *Dramatic Literature of the Reign of Elizabeth*.
 Shelley's *Adonais*.
 1822. Byron's *Vision of Judgment*.
 Lamb's *Essays of Elia*.
 Wilson's *Noctes Ambrosianae*.
 1823. Scott's *Quentin Durward*.
 1824. Carlyle's *Translation of Goethe's Wilhelm Meister*.
 Landor's *Imaginary Conversations* (Vol. I.).
 Mary Mitford's *Our Village*.
 Shelley's *Posthumous Poems*.
 1825. Carlyle's *Life of Schiller*.
 Macaulay's *Essay on Milton*.
 1826. Disraeli's *Vivian Grey*.
 Hallam's *Constitutional History of England*.
 Hood's *Plea of the Midsummer Fairies*, etc.
 Keble's *Christian Year*.
 1829. Hood's *Dream of Eugene Aram*.
 1830. Cobbett's *Rural Rides*.
 Tennyson's *Poems, chiefly Lyrical*.
 1831. Bulwer Lytton's *Eugene Aram*.
 1832. Mrs. Jameson's *Characteristics of Shakespeare's Women*.

TEXT-BOOK

OF ENGLISH LITERATURE.

CHAPTER I.

BEFORE THE CONQUEST.

THE ultimate source of the mighty river of English poetry is hidden in the mists of immemorial antiquity
Introductory. —mists that gather around the continental homes of our ancestors, mists that hide from our gaze the oral lays of the early minstrel muse. Yet it is certain that some of our oldest poetry came over the sea with our forefathers, had first taken life and shape in their continental homes, and had been handed down in growing volume for centuries before a word of it was first committed to writing in this island. This mighty river of English literature, though receiving tributary streams from one and another source, is, from its ultimate origins down to the present time, essentially *one*.¹ The changes in the English language in the last thousand years have been even greater than the changes in our literature, but the language was 'Englisc' a thousand years ago, and it is 'English' still. Similarly

¹ It is the more necessary to state this emphatically because Professor Courthope, whose 'History of English Poetry' is destined to become the classic authority on the subject, asserts that 'the poetry of Chaucer has no connection with the poetry of the Anglo-Saxons' (p. xxvii.). Fortunately he undermines his own position: 'The motive power of Christian European poetry springs from the oral minstrelsy of the Teutonic and Scandinavian tribes' (p. 80). And again: 'The "Canterbury Tales" are the full harvest of the art of the *trouwer*. The *trouwer* was the lineal literary descendant of the tribal gleeman. . . . Originally his tales were doubtless almost invariably of a genealogical character, like the legend of "Beowulf" (p. 279).

it is impossible to mark a line of cleavage in English literature. There have at times been invasions, even inundations, of foreign models and influences, which have been on the whole beneficial in their effect, and without which, it may be admitted, the greatest literary masterpieces could not have been achieved. Nevertheless, these have been but as tributary streams adding their waters to the main flood: there cannot be two English literatures until there are two English languages.

The difficulties of the language unfortunately keep the vast mass of English people ignorant of the intrinsic greatness of Old English poetry. These difficulties have only served to whet the appetite of the Germans, who have consequently almost monopolised this field of study, and, it must in honesty be added, have succeeded in overspreading the literary aspects of the subject with such a thick layer of philological and merely antiquarian discussion as often to turn what should have been delight into weariness. Yet it remains true that in the comparatively small number of Old English poems are our only national epic and the finest lyrics in the English language.

Anglo-Saxon, or, as it is more correctly called, Old English literature falls roughly into two main divisions, which, largely owing to difference of dialect, are kept separate and distinct until, even as late as the close of the eighteenth century, they may be represented by the poetry of Burns and Cowper. The history of the two divisions has been momentarily different. The Northern division began with a blaze of glory in the seventh and eighth centuries; but, on the whole, though it has flared up now and again with a Dunbar and a Burns, its course through the ages has been one of diminution and decadence. The Southern division began in the ninth century with prose; but its course has been one of increasing splendour, and has culminated in a Shakespeare and a Shelley. The Northern division has found expression successively in the Northumbrian dialect of Old English, the Northern and West Midland dialects of Middle English, and in Lowland Scotch; the Southern division in the West Saxon dialect of

Old English, the Southern and East Midland dialects of Middle English, and in standard modern English. In the Old English period, the Northumbrian literature—which has, however, come down to us in a West Saxon dress, as a consequence of the later Alfredian revival—was poetical, and preceded the literature of Wessex, which was mainly prose.

Old English poetry had certain noteworthy characteristics, some of which mark it off from all later verse. *Characteristics of Early Poetry.* Many of its words and phrases are never found in prose, and in fact constituted a 'poetic diction.' A 'ship' was not only a 'boat,' but a 'bound wood,' a 'sound-wood,' a 'foamy-necked floater,' 'wound-stemmed,' 'ring-stemmed,' 'bound-stemmed,' a 'wave-floater,' a 'sea-goer,' a 'keel.' Several of these terms might be used in succeeding lines to refer to the same vessel; this 'parallelism,' with which we are familiar in ancient Hebrew poetry, is well illustrated in the following lines from 'Beowulf':

'sund-wudu þunede;
nō þær wēg-flotan wind ofer ƿðum
siðes getwēfde; sē-genga fōr,
flāt fāmīg-heals forð ofer ƿðe,
bunden-stefna ofer brim-siðamas' (1906-10).¹

Thus it is seen that Old English parallelism was something more than an extended use of synonyms; two or more succeeding lines or half-lines frequently repeat the same idea or statement of fact in other words. One unfortunate circumstance in connection with Old English poetry—the fact that, with few exceptions, its remains have come down to us in unique manuscripts—is due to the Norman Conquest and to the spoliation of the monasteries at the Reformation. This circumstance is largely responsible for, and has gone far towards necessitating and justifying, the recent labours of the philologist. For we know from a comparison of texts, in the few cases in which duplicate manuscripts are extant, with what freedom (to mention one source of corruption only) Old English poets permitted themselves to rewrite the compositions of earlier authors.

¹ The sound-wood dinned; not there did the wind sunder the wave-floater from its journey over the waves; the sea-goer went, the foamy-necked floated forth over the wave, the bound-stemmed over the ocean-streams.

A word as to the metre. Before the Norman Conquest Old English end-rime was almost unknown. Each long or ^{Metre.} full line was broken into two parts by a caesura or pause; each normal half-line consisted of two feet (or in the long lyrical line, of three), and contained two specially stressed syllables; of these syllables—which can usually be picked out without difficulty because they are those which have to bear the rhetorical accent in oral reading—the first in the second half of a long line and either or both in the first half are bound together by alliteration. A consonant can alliterate only with the same consonant, but any vowel alliterates with any other vowel. See, in illustration, the lines quoted above.

It has been said that Old English was 'probably the ^{The National Epic.} most disciplined of all the vernaculars of Western Europe.' It is certain that by the end of the eighth century it possessed a body of poetry that could as well challenge comparison with that of any other Western nation as English literature is able to hold its own against the literatures of the world. By that time 'Beowulf' was certainly in writing in the form (dialect apart) in which it has come down to us. This poem is at once the glory and the disgrace of our people. It is their glory in that it is the oldest heroic poem in any Teutonic language. It is their disgrace in that it is more widely read in America and in Germany. 'The genuine epic,' says Mr. Sweet, 'which is regarded by those for whom it is composed as history and nothing else, is never invented, but has to draw on the common national stock of historical and mythological tradition.' In this obviously correct view, 'Beowulf' is our only genuine epic, it is the national epic.

The argument of the poem is briefly this:

Hrothgar, king of the Danes, with whose ancestry the ^{Argument of 'Beowulf.'} poem opens, in the pride of his success in war builds a great hall, Heorot, for feasting and the giving of treasure. But a monster named Grendel, enraged by the daily sounds of revelry, attacks the hall, makes a meal of fifteen thanes, and carries off fifteen more, returning with similar intent the next night. Thus Heorot

is deserted, and remains so for twelve years. Then Beowulf, a mighty warrior of the Geats, famous for the strength of his grip, hearing of Grendel's ravages, crosses the sea with fourteen comrades, keeps watch in Heorot, and, after seeing one of his men killed and eaten, grapples with the monster and pulls off his whole arm. Grendel escapes to his haunts, and dies. The following night, when the Danes are again in possession of the hall and Beowulf is lodged elsewhere, Grendel's mother breaks in and revenges the death of her son by slaying Aeschere, a noble Dane. Beowulf undertakes the pursuit and revenge; he tracks the she-monster to her lair in the bottom of a mere, and slays her there. Seeing Grendel's corpse, he severs the head from the body, and bears it back with him in triumph to Hrothgar's court. Loaded with rich gifts, the hero returns to his own land, and recites his adventures to Hygelac, his uncle, the king of the Geats. On the death of the latter, Beowulf refuses the throne for himself, and acts as guardian and adviser to the young king Heardred, who is, however, slain in battle. Then Beowulf becomes king of the Geats, whom he rules wisely for fifty years, until a dragon begins to lay waste the land. The old hero's spirit is undaunted as ever, but, deserted by all his chosen warriors save one, although he succeeds in quelling the fiery 'drake,' he himself meets with his death in the terrible encounter. With the burning of his body the poem ends.

Into any discussion of the various questions that have arisen in connection with 'Beowulf' it is impossible to enter here. There can be no doubt that it is the result of a gradual accretion of poetic and epic material, some parts of which are of hoary antiquity¹; it is highly probable that in something very nearly resembling its present shape (perhaps without the final Christian touches and interpolations) it represents the working over of this material by a poet of high order, who made of it one homogeneous poem. 'Beowulf' has been claimed as a Scandinavian poem, because all the

¹ This is perhaps especially true of the episodes, which would be less liable to alteration than the main story. It is noteworthy that in one episode Sigemund is made the slayer of the dragon, and not his son Sigurd or Siegfried, as in the Icelandic and German versions of that saga. This seems to point to the 'Beowulf' version being the oldest, for a later setting would not be likely to attribute the deeds of the son to the father, but rather the deeds of the father to the son.

principal *personae* belong to Scandinavian tribes. It is true that the historical setting is Scandinavian; but the mythical adventures which form the bulk and constitute the main interest of the story are essentially English, and so, it will be seen, is the scenery. In a number of Old English royal genealogies occurs the name of a divine mythical ancestor Beawa or Beowa. Probably the mythical adventures told in 'Beowulf' were originally ascribed to this mythical god Beowa. Probably, too, the fame of the extraordinary prowess and wondrous achievements of an historical Geat warrior, named Beowulf, who lived in the first half of the sixth century, found a most favourable reception among the Angles and Saxons both on the Continent and in England, in consequence of the similarity of name, and because the reported character and exaggerated exploits of the hero Beowulf resembled those of the god Beowa. Thus the historical Beowulf at length stepped into the place of the mythical Beowa.

But perhaps the most important and the most interesting feature of the 'Beowulf' saga is the picture it affords of the tribal life of our English forefathers. The incidents of Beowulf's crossing from Sweden to Zealand, his challenge by the coastguard, his arrival and welcome at Heorot, the scene in the royal hall by day and at night, and every detail of speech, ceremony, and adventure until his return to Geatland, are pictured with an accuracy that is evidently as faithful as it is minute. The events of one whole day at Heorot are related with a vivid lifelikeness of which the reading of the poem can alone give a just idea. The scope rarely becomes wearisome. He is not given to moralising over much. Hampered as he may seem to be by his parallelisms, his narrative marches briskly on, and he varies the sound of his verse to correspond with the sense with astonishing skill. Though metaphors abound, he has not time for similes; only some five or six are to be found in the course of 3,200 lines, and of these one only is of any length;:

'hit cal gemealt Isc gelicost,
 ðonne forstes bend Fræder onlæteð,
 onwinded wæl-rāpas, sē gewæld hafas
 sēla ond mæla.'

¹ It all melted most like to ice, when the Father looseth the bond of the frost, unwinds the whirlpool-ropes, He who has control of times and seasons.

The following rendering of part of a *locus classicus* gives perhaps as good a notion of the best of Old English poetry as can be conveyed in a translation. It describes the moorland retreat of Grendel and his mother:

'They dwell in a dim hidden land,
The wolf-bents they bide in, on the nesses the windy,
The perilous fen-path where the stream of the fell-side
Midst the mists of the nesses wends notherward ever,
The flood under earth. Naught far away hence,
But a mile-mark forsooth, there standeth the mere,
And over it ever hang groves all berimed,
The wood fast by the roots over-helmeth the water.
But each night may one a dread wonder there see,
A fire in the flood. But none liveth so wise
Of the bairns of mankind, that the bottom may know.
Although the heath-stepper beswinked by hounds,
The hart strong of horns, thatholt-wood should seek to
Driven fleeing from far, he shall sooner leave life,
Leave life-breath on the bank or ever will he
Therein hide his head. No hallow'd stead is it:
Thence the blending of water-waves ever upriseth
Wan up to the welkin, whenso the wind stirreth
Weather-storms loathly, until the lift darkens
'And weepeth the heavens.'

Old English must at one time have possessed several complete and independent sagas of epic dimensions, but, apart from 'Beowulf,' nothing now survives but 'The Fight at Finnsburg,' a fragment of forty-eight lines; the two 'Waldhere' fragments of thirty lines each; and 'Widsith,' a kind of epic song, possibly the oldest of them all. The 'Finnsburg' fragment points to the loss of a magnificent poem.

But, after 'Beowulf,' the finest things in Old English poetry are its lyrics, and in the opinion of excellent judges there exists nothing finer of their kind: 'Deor,' 'The Wanderer,' 'The Seafarer,' 'The Ruin,' 'The Wife's Complaint.' Common to all these is a note of deep melancholy, which is by no means absent from 'Beowulf,' but which in these lyrics is characteristic and predominant. Hardly is it possible to strike a chord of truer and deeper pathos than that struck in 'The Wanderer,' to whom in his

¹ Ll. 1857-76 of the 'Story of Beowulf,' done out of the Old English tongue by William Morris and A. J. Wyatt: London, 1895.

exile it seems 'that he is embracing and kissing his liege-lord, and laying hands and head on his knee, just as he whilom in days of yore enjoyed the gift-stool. Then awakens again the friendless man, sees before him the fallow ways, the sea-fowls bathing, extending their wings, rime and snow falling mingled with hail. Then will be the heavier the wounds of his heart, sore for its beloved.'

With Caedmon we pass into the realm of sacred poetry.

Caedmon. The story of his conversion into a poet, as related by Bede, has been told too often to be repeated here except in outline: how Caedmon left the feast when it came to his turn to sing; how, as he was sleeping in the cattle-sheds, an angel appeared to him, and commanded him to sing the song of *Oration*; and how he forthwith composed the verses which form the opening of the 'Paraphrase of Genesis.' Bede adds that his gift was tested by Hild, the abbess of Whitby, and her learned monks; that Caedmon was readily prevailed on to join the monastery; he mentions the subjects of his poems, and warns us that many persons had attempted to imitate Caedmon's religious poetry, but none had succeeded in equalling him. Caedmon flourished in the latter half of the seventh century; Bede died in 735 A.D. In the form in which the so-called Caedmonian or Junian¹ 'Paraphrase' has come down to us, it consists of what may be roughly described as four poems: 'Genesis,' 'Exodus,' 'Daniel,' and 'Christ and Satan.' But, although their subjects correspond closely with Bede's account of the contents of Caedmon's poetry, modern criticism denies to the latter the authorship of any of them, with the exception of part of 'Genesis.'

In connection with the last-named poem two questions, not devoid of interest, arise. The first is a question of scholarship and criticism, and is cited here as an example of what, as a rule, it is not within the limits of this book to include. 'Genesis' consists of about three thousand lines. Some six hundred of these, ll. 235—851, commonly called 'Genesis B,' differ so entirely from the rest in metre, diction, and style, and resemble so closely the old

¹ So called from its first editor, Francis Junon, a scholar of Leyden, known in literature as 'Junius,' to whom the MS. was given by Archbishop Usher.

Saxon poem called 'The Heliand,' that as long ago as 1875 Professor Sievers of Tübingen, a German critic of penetrating intellect, put forward the hypothesis that 'Genesis B' was an Old English version of an Old Saxon poem on Genesis by the author of 'The Heliand.' In 1894 Sievers' conclusions received almost startling confirmation. Four fragments of Old Saxon poetry were discovered in a MS. in the Vatican Library, of which three were portions of a poem on the book of Genesis, and the fourth was a part of the 'Heliand.' There can be no reasonable doubt that they are all the work of one and the same author. Moreover, one of the Genesis fragments lies within the compass of 'Genesis B,' and shows that the latter is a close rendering of the former. It is difficult to conceive of a more striking proof of a carefully worked out hypothesis.

The Caedmonian 'Paraphrase of Genesis' contains 'the germ of "Paradise Lost."' Milton became blind three years before the publication of the Junian Caedmon in 1655. But he numbered Junius among his friends, and some resemblances between the two poems 'in matter and expression are so remarkable that it is difficult to regard them as fortuitous.' Of such resemblances two or three examples must suffice:

- (a) ' þonne cymð on uhtan ēasterne wind,
forst fyrnum cald ; symble fȳr oððe gūr . .
þæt wæs lēohles lēas and wæs lūges full,
fȳres fēor micel.'—*Genesis* 315-16, 333-4.

'A dungeon horrible on all sides round
As one great furnace flam'd ; yet from those flames
No light, but rather darkness visible.'—*Paradise Lost*, i. 61-3.

'the parching air
Burns froze, and cold performs th' effect of fire.'—
Paradise Lost, ii. 594-5.

- (b) 'Is þes ænga styde ungelic swiðe
þām oððrum þe wū fēor cūðon,
hēan on heofonrice.'²—*Genesis* 356-8.

'O how unlike the place from whence they fell !'—
Paradise Lost, i. 75

¹ 'Then comes at dawn the east wind, frost fearfully cold ; ever fire or spear . .
That was lightless and was full of flame, great fear of fire.'

² 'Is this narrow stead very unlike that other that we ere knew, high in heaven's kingdom.'

"Is this the region, this the soil, the clime,"
Said then the lost Archangel, "this the seat
That we must change for Heav'n?"—

Paradise Lost, i. 242-4.

(o) 'Swang þæt fyr on twā fēondes cræfte.'—
Genesis, 449

'on each hand the flames
Driv'n backward slope their pointing spires, and roll'd
In billows, leave i' th' midst a horrid vale.'—

Paradise Lost, i. 222-1.

With a word of mention only for 'Judith'—a religious epic fragment of three hundred and fifty lines, the last three 'fits' of a poem of four times that length, belonging to the eighth or ninth century, and designed and executed with metrical brilliancy and sustained narrative power—we pass to the work of Cynewulf, who represents the later Northumbrian school of the latter half of the eighth century. Unfortunately, the chief controversy that has been raised around the name of Cynewulf concerns the unprofitable question of authorship. Cynewulf (as if in prophetic vision of the fate of Old English poets in the nineteenth century) ingeniously introduced the letters of his name in runic characters into four poems, which are thereby stamped as indubitably his: 'Crist,' 'Juliana,' 'Elene,' and 'The Fates of the Apostles.' Of course it has been argued that if Cynewulf signed four poems in this way, he would have signed more if he had written more—and would doubtless have had them all brought out by the same publisher! Such conclusions are not borne out by actual experience. On the other hand, none but these four poems can be assigned to Cynewulf with absolute certainty. About ninety 'Riddles,' in the anthology of Old English poetry called the Exeter Codex, have been ascribed to Cynewulf, on the supposition that the first riddle was a charade on his name. But it is now known that the supposed first riddle is not a riddle or charade at all, but an independent poem. Nevertheless, the majority of the 'Riddles' and the Christianised 'Charms' may well be Cynewulf's work; so, almost certainly, is 'The Phoenix'; while 'St. Guthlac,' 'The Descent into Hell,' and 'The

¹ 'Swang the fire in two with fiendish craft.

'Dream of the Rood' are also possibly his, in part at least. Probably he is not the author of the 'Andreas.' The 'Elene,' a religious narrative of the finding of the true cross by Helena, the mother of Constantine, concludes with an autobiographical epilogue, which is almost our only source of information as to the poet's life. From it we infer that he had been a professional minstrel, known in festive halls and rewarded for his songs with golden gifts, but that with the coming on of age the mystery of the cross had been revealed to him and had changed his life. As all the work that we know for certain to be his is of a religious cast, we must presume that it dates after this great change in his life. Its poetic value varies greatly in the course of the same piece; but at times it shows a rapidity of movement, and at others a descriptive power, that at least proves that the Christian influence, so manifest in Cynewulf's work, had not been destructive of all the charm and inspiration of the old heathen poetry.

Among the most important of the Old English poems not hitherto named are the 'Battle of Maldon,' an epic song composed shortly after the battle it describes, in 993; the 'Battle of Brunanburh' (inserted in the 'Chronicle' under the year 937), full of poetic feeling and patriotic exultation; and the 'Gnomic Verses,' collections of which have come down in more than one manuscript.

Old English prose, apart from the 'Anglo-Saxon
 Prosa. Chronicle,' is for the most part as devoid of interest as the poetry is full of charm and variety. It consists mainly of translations into the vernacular of such works as the 'Universal History' of the Spanish presbyter Orosius (circ. 418 A.D.), Bede's 'Ecclesiastical History,' the 'Consolation of Philosophy' of Boethius, Gregory's 'Dialogues' and 'Pastoral Care,' all due either to Alfred's own labours or to his direct instigation, and some of them enriched with original contributions; and of collections of 'Homilies,' drawn in substance from the Fathers. Suggestive and necessary as these doubtless were for Alfred's subjects, they do not form inspiring reading for the possessors of a richer literary heritage than theirs. But in the 'Anglo-Saxon Chronicle'

we possess at once a storehouse of historical material, 'the oldest historical prose in any Teutonic language,'¹ the spirited contemporary narrative of Alfred's Danish wars,² and an invaluable record of the gradual changes that the language underwent from about the time of Alfred down to the middle of the twelfth century. The 'Chronicle' is extant in seven different MSS.³ (besides fragments of others), showing seven different recensions of the text, the relation of which to one another is a problem that awaits fuller investigation. Another question of interest concerns the point at which the annals begin to be contemporary with the events they describe. We know that the annals for the earliest centuries are book-made, that is to say, compiled from Bede and other sources, and were preposited to the contemporary annals; but the date at which the book-made give place to the contemporary annals has not yet been fixed with any certainty. One MS. of the 'Chronicle' carries the narrative seventy years later than any other, to the close of Stephen's reign.

¹ See the entry for the year 755 in the Parker MS.

² Especially for the years 804-7 in the Parker MS.

³ The seven principal MSS. are distinguished as follows:—

A, connected with Winchester and Canterbury, ends with 1070 A.D.

B, connected with St. Augustine's, Canterbury, ends with 977 A.D.

C, connected with Abingdon, ends with 1066 A.D.

D, connected with Worcester, ends with 1070 A.D.

E, connected with Peterborough, ends with 1154 A.D.

F (Latin and Anglo-Saxon), connected with Christ Church, Canterbury, ends with 1053 A.D.

G, a transcript of A, ends with 1001 A.D.

CHAPTER II.

FROM THE NORMAN CONQUEST TO CHAUCER.

ONE effect of the Norman Conquest we have already seen, in the destruction of many MSS. containing the finest monuments of Old English poetry; its effect upon the continuance of Old English literature was equally disastrous. For generations after 1066 English was the language of a despised and down-trodden people; only in the monasteries was the study of the old literature maintained, and there alone did the old language continue to be written with any pretence to literary style. In Peterborough Abbey the Old English 'Chronicle' was continued down to the year 1154, but the latest entries are somewhat few and far between: 1132, 1135, 1137, 1138, 1140, 1154. A quotation from what is undoubtedly a contemporary entry—that for the year 1137—will show how far the language had changed seventy years after the Conquest, and lead up to the consideration of the causes of change.

' Wes næure gæt mare wreccehed on land. ne næure hethen men werse ne diden þan hi diden. for oner sithon ne for-baren hi nouthur circe ne cyrce-ierd. oc namen al þe god ƿ þar-inne was. 7 brenden sythen þe cyrce 7 al te gædere. Ne hi ne for-baren *biscope*s land ne *abbotes* ne preostes. ne ræueden munekes 7 clerekes. 7 wæric man oðer þe ouer myhte. Gif twa men oðer iiii coman ridend to an tun. al þe tunscepe fugen for heom. wenden ƿ hi wæron ræneres. þe *biscope*s and lered men heom cursede næure. oc was heom naht þar-of for hi uueron al for-cursed 7 for-suoren 7 for-loren.'¹

¹ 'Never yet was greater wretchedness in the land, nor ever did the heathen men worse than they did; for nowhere afterwards did they spare either church or churchyard, but took all the wealth that was therein, and afterwards burnt the church and all together. Nor did they spare bishop's land, nor abbot's, nor priest's, but plundered monks and clerks, and every man another wherever he could. If two or three men came riding to a town, all the township fled before them, supposed that they were robbers. The bishops and clergy ever cursed them, but that was naught to them, for they were all accursed and forsworn and reprobate.'

The effects of the Norman Conquest upon our language have been habitually and greatly over-estimated. It is necessary to distinguish the two elements of inflection and vocabulary. Upon the last the effect of the Conquest was no doubt ultimately great, but it took some two centuries before it made itself felt in any large measure. On the other hand, some time before that 'blessing in disguise' befel us, the English language was showing inherent signs of flexional decay in the weakening and assimilation of terminations. Roughly, it may be said that inflections in later Middle English were reduced to three: terminal vowels were finally all reduced to *-e*; terminations ending in a nasal all finally became *-en*; *-as* and *-es* assimilated to *-es*. This process of change was not consummated until the fourteenth century, but its beginnings may be traced at least from the early eleventh century; it was inherent therefore in the language itself, and cannot have been more than hastened by the Conquest. It is essential that this point should be insisted on and clearly grasped, because one so often finds the Norman Conquest assigned as the sole *causa causans* of the inflectional decay that marks off Middle English from the language in its earlier periods. As English became disinfllected—in other words, as it passed from a synthetic to an analytic language—the place and function of its disappearing inflections had to be supplied by prepositions and other connective words. Here no doubt the influence of Anglo-French (or Norman French), a much less highly inflected language, told in course of time. But, we repeat, the flexional decay which preceded and necessitated the use of connectives was independent of the Conquest; the change was practically consummated before the two languages came into close enough relations for the one to influence the other.

The influence of Anglo-French upon the English vocabulary was much greater, but it was very slow in making itself felt; and when it did, it was literary or written English that it first and chiefly affected. And the additions that came from the French stock were by no means due to Anglo-French alone; by the time that French words were being imported in considerable numbers,

continental French literature had become known to many of our southern and more courtly English 'makers,' and it was by way of this literature that most of the importations came to be made. How gradually the vocabulary was enlarged from this source the following figures will show. According to Kington Oliphant, 'there were about a hundred and fifty Romance words in our tongue before 1066, being mostly the names of church furniture, foreign plants, and strange animals.' 'The "Chronicle" entries during the first half of the twelfth century,' says another writer, 'contain less than twenty French words. Layamon's "Brut," with its twenty-eight thousand long lines, was based on a French poem by Wace. We possess two texts, one written about 1200 and one about 1250, yet in both the number of French words does not exceed a hundred and fifty. In all Middle English writings before 1250, the number of French words probably does not exceed five hundred. By the year 1300 some thousand French words were used in written monuments; while in some thirty-one texts written before 1400, Skeat has discovered three thousand four hundred words of French origin.'¹ In ten pages of Robert of Gloucester's 'Chronicle,' 1298 A.D., Marsh has calculated that four per cent. of the vocabulary is Anglo-French. In the 'Ormulum,' a work emanating in the first quarter of the same century from a northern region remote from court influences, French words are conspicuously absent. Side by side with the increase in the number of words of French origin went the loss of words from the Teutonic side. 'If we divide the thirteenth century into three equal parts,' says a writer we have already quoted, 'the first division will take in writers who have eight or ten obsolete English words [nouns, adjectives, adverbs, and verbs] out of fifty; the writers of the middle division have from five to seven obsolete English words out of fifty; and the writers of the last division have only three or four obsolete English words out of fifty. . . . One-seventh of the Teutonic words used here in 1200 seems to have altogether dropped out of written composition by the year 1290: about this fact there can be no dispute.' These two facts

¹ 'The History of the English Language,' by O. F. Emerson, p. 102.

taken together, the decrease in the Teutonic and the increase in the Romance element—in a word, the tendency towards equalisation in the proportions of the two great elements in our tongue—must be taken as significant of, and paving the way for, the blending of the Norman and English elements in the nation itself, that unification of the nation which became an accomplished fact in the fourteenth century.

But when we pass from language to versification and literature proper, it is no longer possible to depreciate Anglo-Norman influence. 'It was through the Normans,' says Lowell,¹ 'that the English mind and fancy, hitherto provincial and uncouth, were first infused with the lightness, grace, and self-confidence of Romance literature. . . . The old Gothic volume, grim with legends of devilish temptation and satanic lore, they illuminated with the gay and brilliant inventions of a softer climate and more genial moods.' M. Jussorand, in a memorable sentence, hits off the literary characteristics of the two races with equal truth and greater terseness: 'The Saxon dreams his dream and sings his song; the Norman listens and says, Why not? Be it so.' In other words, the Norman *trouvère* brought to our literature Latin civilisation and refinement, and the philosophy of the Schools; the Norman, too, supplemented the political sagacity of the Saxon with a practical quality of a more literary character, which we may see illustrated on the one hand in the *fabliau*² and on the other in the satirical side of Chaucer's genius.

Inseparable from the changes we have just been reviewing was a change in the character of the versification. The Old English metrical system, well enough suited for a highly inflected language and for the subjects of Old English verse, was not elastic or not plastic enough to meet the demands made upon it by the changes in

¹ Lowell, with all his greatness, was as ignorant as most people about Old English literature. 'The Anglo-Saxons never had any real literature of their own,' quothn.

² 'The *fabliau* in no respect excludes seriousness, but its dominant spirit is jocund and sportive, and though it often falls into licentiousness it always maintains, with arch *naïveté*, a certain epic dignity. It often represents husbands, peasants, merchants, and especially clergymen, in delicate situations, exposes the morals of the time with much epigrammaticness, and with broad derision pillories the servants of the church' (Ton Brink). Chaucer's coarser 'Canterbury Tales' are based on *fabliaux*.

language and in subject. Even when it was revived in the latter half of the fourteenth century, it was really a new metre. Fortunately, however, the changes in the language facilitated the adoption of new metres to meet the demands of new subjects. The disinfection of the language and the increase in the number of particles produced an instrument that lent itself much more readily to the facile expression of new modes and complexities of thought; and, as an inevitable consequence of the very nature of these changes, new metres were also demanded. One illustration of this necessity for new metres will be significant. In an ordinary long line of Old English (four-accent) verse, where the number of unaccented syllables is often as many as seven or eight, the average number of words in a line is about five; in Middle English octosyllabic verse, where the number of unaccented syllables in a line is restricted and in Chaucer is reduced to four, the average number of words in a line is at least six.¹ The required metres were found in those of a language as analytic as Middle English had come to be; and the iambic rhythm, borrowed from Anglo-French verse, rapidly became the characteristic movement of English poetry. Treated at first with something of Old English freedom in the introduction of unstressed syllables, our versification was refined by Chaucer to a smoothness and precision which entitle him to the praise mistakenly bestowed on Waller by Dryden.² Even in the 'Ormulum,' one of the very first metrical works written in English after the Conquest, we see 'the influence indirectly exercised by the iambic rhythm of Anglo-Norman verse, on the ear even of those who were least affected by French literary models.'

The poetical production of the three centuries following the Conquest conveniently divides itself into
 Three Periods of Poetry. three periods. (1) Up to the close of the twelfth century, almost nothing written in English verse has survived, with the exception of the 'Poema Morale,' *circ.* 1170. A considerable amount of Latin and Anglo-

¹ In twenty-five consecutive lines of 'Beowulf' the average number of words was almost exactly five; in twenty-five consecutive lines of the 'Owl and Nightingale' the average number of words was a little over six; in the first twenty-five lines of Chaucer's 'House of Fame' it is almost exactly six.

² See the dedication of 'The Rival Ladies,' preface to 'Fables,' etc.

French poetry, some of it of great moment both in itself and in its effect upon later literature, was written in England in this period, but the scale and plan of this history exclude it from our consideration, and the remainder of this chapter will therefore be devoted to the hundred and fifty years from 1200 to 1350. (2) If we take a point half way between those two dates, it may be said with as near an approximation to accuracy as is possible in such generalisations, that before the year 1275 English poetry was European, cosmopolitan, universal, in its range of subjects and mode of treatment; that is to say, the subjects of poetry were common to Western civilisation, and the treatment was conventional. (3) After the year 1275 English poetry begins to show traces of *nationality* in something more than language, especially in its political songs; but it is not until the reign of Edward III. that this feature comes into real prominence; it was not, as has been already implied, until there was a uniting of the Saxon and Norman elements into one nation that our first national poet since the Conquest could appear.

This change from the universal to the national in the character of our poetry, or rather the appearance of characteristically English features both in subject and mode of treatment, is so momentous that we must be pardoned for quoting at some length a great literary critic and historian,¹ who has thrown much light on the factors, movements, and developments of Middle English poetry. 'In almost all the surviving English poetry of the thirteenth century the influence of monastic education predominates. The subjects selected for metrical treatment are either of an exclusively religious nature, consisting . . . chiefly of homilies, hymns to the Virgin, and thoughts on the Last Judgment, or involve such scientific topics—Bestiaries and Calendars—as fell within the circle of ecclesiastical study. . . . As a rule, the motive of composition is no higher than a wish to imitate, in vernacular diction and verse, ideas which first impressed themselves on the mind of the writer in a Latin form.' And again:

¹ 'History of English Poetry,' vol. I., by Professor Courthope, London, 1805. To the fourth and fifth chapters of this work we refer all students who desire fuller knowledge of the period sketched in our second chapter.

'Up to the middle of the thirteenth century European poetry may be said to possess a universal character. Whether composed in Latin or in any of the infant vernacular tongues, the thoughts embodied in it—scientific, devotional, sentimental, or romantic—are completely free from all traces of local or national colouring. When an Englishman or a Frenchman writes a Bestiary, he is, in each case, sure to describe in it the attributes of the panther, and to inform his readers that the animal's sweet breath makes him a type of the Saviour. A poetical moralist, whatever be his tongue, wishing to dwell on the vanity of earthly things, will certainly draw some of his ideas from Boethius' '*De Consolatione Philosophiae*'; and the poetical homilist will be under like obligations to Gregory the Great. Love-poetry composed by the troubadours of Provence is intelligible to the knights of the German castles; and the tales of Lancelot and Guinevere, or Tristram and Iseult, written perhaps beyond the English Channel, are read on the shores of Rimini.' And once more: 'Rude and imperfect as is the vehicle of expression, the popular songs of England in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries reveal a consciousness of united purpose and corporate pride in the nation, for which no contemporary parallel can be found in any other country of Europe, and which arises from political conditions of the kind that gave birth to the oratory of Pericles and Cicero. The time had not yet come for England when the masterpieces of ancient literature could exercise a refining influence on the efforts of her native genius. In this respect her early writers lay behind those of France and Italy. . . . There is no sign of a reverence for the authority of the ancient philosophers; no attempt to utilise the resources of pagan mythology, like that which we encounter in almost every page of the '*Divine Comedy*' or the '*Romance of the Rose*.' These features do not appear in English poetry till the time of Chaucer, and in him they are the fruits rather of the imitation of Boccaccio and John de Meung, than of the direct influence of classical literature. What is really 'classical,' in this embryonic English art, is a certain direct manner of looking on Nature, Man, and Society, the result of political as opposed to scholastic education.'

It remains now for us to notice individually a few of the writers whose poems illustrate the operation of the various changes we have been sketching, before passing to a brief survey of Middle English prose.

From some Augustinian monastery in the north of the The 'Ormulum,' East Midland district, in the early years of
circa. 1200. the thirteenth century, came a curious metrical work, named after its author the 'Ormulum'¹ :—

'þiss boc is nemmedd Orrmulum
 forþi þatt Orm itt wrohhte.'

Elsewhere he calls himself Ormin :—

'Icc þatt tiss Ennglissh hæfe sett
 Ennglisshe menn to lare,
 icc was þær, þær i crisstnedd wass,
 Orrmin bi name nemmedd.'²

From the opening of his dedication we learn almost all else that we know about him :—

'Nu, broþerr Wallterr, broþerr min
 afterr þe flashest kinde ;
 7 broþerr min i Crisstenndom
 þurh fulluht 7 þurh trowþe ;
 7 broþerr min i Godess hus,
 set o þe þridde wise,
 þurh þatt witt hafenn takenn ba
 an re3hellboc to foll3henn,
 unnderr kanunnkess bad 7 lif,
 swa-summ Saunt Awwstin sette ;
 icc hæfe don swa-summ þu badd,
 7 forþedd te þin wille,
 icc hæfe wennd inn till Ennglissh
 goddspolless hall3he lare,
 afterr þatt little witt þatt me
 min Drihtin hæfeþ lenedd.'³

Orm's work is a gigantic torso of some twenty thousand lines, consisting of a paraphrase of the gospel of the day and an explanatory homily for thirty-two days of the year.

¹ 'This book is named Ormulum because Orm made it.'

² 'I, that have set down this English for teaching to English men, was named Ormin by name where I was christened.'

³ 'Now, brother Walter, my brother according to the flesh ; and my brother in Christendom through baptism and through faith ; and my brother yet in the third wise, in God's house, because we two have both undertaken to follow one rule-book, in the order and life of a canon, just as St. Austin appointed ; I have done as thou askedst and fulfilled thy will, I have turned into English the Gospel's holy teaching, in accordance with the little wit that my Lord has lent me.'

His chief sources were Bede and Gregory. Some credit is due to him as a pioneer in restoring the English tongue to a position of repute in the land, and in the adoption of foreign rhythms. But, as Mr. Sweet has unkindly though truthfully remarked, Orm 'was, in fact, a spelling reformer and philologist who mistook his vocation.' His doubling of consonants after short vowels, while it terrifies the ordinary reader more than the sight of a piece of Old English poetry, is of great service to the historical grammarian.

About the same time, but from the opposite side of the Layamon's country, at Arley on the Severn—near that Saxo-
'Brut,' *circa* 1205. Celtic borderland which has produced so fertile a crop of English genius—came a work of much greater importance from the literary standpoint. Layamon's 'Brut' has been called 'the first metrical romance, after "Beowulf," that the English literature possesses.' The genealogy¹ of the work is highly interesting and significant. It is an expanded translation of Wace's Anglo-Norman 'Brut,'² which was based on Geoffrey of Monmouth's Latin 'Historia Regum Britanniae.' Just as Wace had added to Geoffrey 'the first glimpse of the spirit of chivalry' in the institution of the Round Table, so Layamon made many important additions to Wace, which 'seem to be mostly derived from Welsh traditions.'³ He mentions three authorities: 'Layamon began to journey wide over this land, and procured the noble books which he took for pattern. He took the English book that St. Bede made; another he took, in Latin, that St. Albin made and the fair Austin who brought baptism in hither; the third book he took, and laid there in the midst, that a French clerk made who was named Wace; who well could write. . . . Pen he took with fingers and wrote a book-skin, and the true word set together, and the three books compressed into one.' But, in fact, Layamon took from Bede only the story of Gregory and the Anglo-Saxon

¹ Courthope gives this genealogy the other way. 'The Celtic patriotism of the pseudo-Nennius altered the lines of true history, by blending with Bede's matter of fact the fabulous version of the History of Britain. This again . . . furnished Geoffrey of Monmouth with the germs of his Latin romance, which the Norman Wace, proud of the great traditions of the land conquered by his countrymen, reduced to prosaic French verse, thereby inspiring the more imaginative Layamon with a new theme of Saxon minstrelsy.'

² Wace 15,300 lines; Layamon 82,250 lines.

³ Ward, 'Catalogue of Romances,' i. 260; London, 1853.

youths in Rome; and the Latin book of Albinus and Austin has not been identified, unless indeed, as seems not improbable, Layamon meant by 'Bede' the West Saxon version of Bede, and by 'St. Albin and Austin' Bede's original '*Historia Ecclesiastica*.' Layamon's verse shows a curious blending of the old and the new. Alliteration predominates, but rime is also frequently introduced; not infrequently the two are combined. 'Compared with "*Beowulf*," the metrical structure of the "*Brut*" resembles those debased forms of architecture in which the leading external features are reproduced long after the reason of their invention has been forgotten.' A few double lines by way of illustration:—

'Þis iherde Uortiger, of alchen uecle he wes war,
& seide hit an Brattise, ne cuðe he nan Ænglisc:
"Maiden Rouwenne, drinc blīðeliche þenne."
Þat maide dronc up þat win, & lette don oðer þer-in;
& bi-tæhten þan kinge, & þrien hine caste;
& þurh þa ilke leoden þa laȝen comen to þissen londe,
wæs-hail & drinc-hæil; moni mon þer-of is fain.'

These two pioneers in Middle English verse enhanced their fame by enshrining their names in their works; the fame of the nameless author of the 'Owl and Nightingale,' circ. 1276. 'Owl and Nightingale' has suffered somewhat because he did not take the same precaution. This poem is the first example in our literature of the 'flyting,' or contest in verse, which had long been a familiar form of poetical composition in France. It is written in octosyllabic couplets. 'Representing the highest contemporary art, this poem diverges,' says Ten Brink, 'in many unique qualities, from the southern art-poetry, to which it belongs in language and locality; first, in the subject, which is not religious, and not less in its purely national colour and original treatment.' The disputants ultimately agree to refer the matter at issue to 'maister Nichole,' who 'wunep at Portes-hom, At one tune in Dorsete,' and to this worthy the authorship of the poem has consequently been ascribed. But this is hardly critical. Certainly the virtues ascribed

¹ 'Vortigern heard this—of every evil he was aware—and said it in British (he knew no English): "*Maiden Rowena, drink blithely then.*" The maid drank up the wine, and bad other put therein and handed to the king, and klesed him thrice; and through those same people those customs came to this land, wassail and drink-hail; many a one is glad thereof.

to Master Nicholas in the poem are incompatible with the immodesty of his imputing them to himself.

Passing by, with a mere mention, the poetical 'Chronicles' of Robert of Gloucester, 1298 (some passages of which have been so often quoted), and of Robert Manning of Bourne, 1338—the latter written in octosyllabic couplets in the first part where he follows Wace, and in Alexandrine¹ couplets in the second and longer part, where he follows Peter de Langtoft's French riming chronicle—we come in 1303 to a noteworthy work, the same Robert Manning of Bourne's 'Handlyng Synne,' partly translated from William of Waddington's 'Manuel des Pechiez.' Noteworthy Manning undoubtedly is both in language and in matter. Oliphant is not far wrong when he calls the 'Handlyng Synne' 'the work which, more clearly than any former one, foreshadowed the road that English literature was to tread from that time forward.' He would have been at least equally near the mark if he had said 'English language.' The East Midland dialect in which he writes is as disinflected as Southern English of a hundred years later, and points to East Midland as the parent of standard modern English. But Manning is also a pioneer in literature. He is here no mere translator; the stories with which he enlivens his pages are all his own, and in them we see 'the alchemy of Norman poetry transmuting the metrical homily.' Manning in this work and the author of the 'Cursor Mundi' (about 1320) show us the first great inroad of romance elements into Middle English verse. The latter author, whose work consists chiefly of a rapid but comprehensive survey of sacred history, draws his materials from unwontedly varied sources. 'He presses into his service romantic science, . . . romantic sacred legend, . . . romantic religious allegory, . . . and romantic religious history.'

Before quitting poetry, a word must be said about a branch of literature to which a chapter might better be given—romances. As the *chansons de gestes* were followed by the more elaborate metrical

¹ So named from a medieval French romance, 'Alexandre,' written in twelve-syllabled verse.

romances, so the latter were in turn followed by prose settings, first in (Anglo-) French, then in English. The chief of them may be divided into the following cycles: (a) The cycle of Troy; (b) the cycle of Alexander the Great; (c) the cycle of Charlemagne; (d) the Arthurian cycle; (e) the Teutonic and Anglo-Danish cycle. Even the romances of the last-named cycle, such as 'Havelok' and 'King Horn,' seem to have been first composed in French, though the materials were derived from English sources. Speaking generally, the earliest romances are the best in every way. In the fourteenth century they had become the interminably dreary, lifeless, songless productions which Chaucer ridiculed so effectively in his 'Rime of Sir Thopas.' In the Charlemagne cycle 'the heroic valour of the defenders of the country forms the principal interest of the stories'; in the classical, or pseudo-classical,¹ cycles the marvellous and extraordinary adventures² related form the centre of interest (or its opposite); in the Arthurian cycle it is love. M. Jusserand gives an amusing account of the deterioration that followed when once this stage was reached. 'After having been first an accessory, then an irresistible passion, love, that the poets think to magnify, will soon be nothing but a ceremonial. From the time of Lancelot we border on folly; military honour no longer counts for the hero; Guinevere, out of caprice, orders Lancelot to behave "his worst"; without hesitating or comprehending he obeys, and covers himself with shame. Each successive romance writer goes a step farther, and makes new additions; we come to immense compositions, to strings of adventures without any visible link, to heroes so uniformly wonderful that they cease to inspire any interest whatever.'

The dulness of Middle English prose is not relieved by Middle English any particular interest attaching to its development, because it does not develop. It maintains a pretty uniform level, and, it must be added, a somewhat dead level. The prose of the 'Ancren Riwe' (about 1210)

¹ Little more than the names is classical; everything else is purely medieval.

² For example, Alexander 'gets into a glass barrel lighted by lamps, and is let down to the bottom of the sea, where he watches the gambols of marine monsters.'

and the prose of Chaucer are hardly of higher quality, in point of style, than the prose of the 'Anglo-Saxon Chronicle' for the years 894-7, or 1137 (see p. 13). Chaucer did nothing for English prose. What he did for poetry in the fourteenth century was done by others for prose in the fifteenth, but in a less marked degree. In medieval times prose was not popular. Not that there was a superabundance of good poetry; but everything, fit or unfit, was forced through the metrical mill. Whatever was intended to 'catch the popular ear' had to follow the fashion of riming. Prose was used for special purposes, or to appeal to special audiences. Its monotonous level was partly due to its unpopularity, but still more to its sameness of models. Latin prose, chiefly late and medieval Latin prose, was the one model of style for all the vernaculars of Western Europe. The dangers in the path of prose were consequently twofold: it tended, on the one hand, to assume unnaturally the ornaments of verse, as in the alliterative prose of Aelfric's 'Passiones Sanctorum';¹ on the other hand, having no internal principle of development, receiving no upward impetus such as Chaucer gave to poetry, and doing the work of the Nethinim among writers, 'the hewers of wood and the drawers of water,' it had the fate, not unusual in such circumstances, of becoming 'weary, stale, flat, and unprofitable.'

Not one of these adjectives applies to the work that we have selected to typify the best of medieval English prose, the 'Ancren Riwe,' or Anchoresses' Rule. This is a guide to convent life addressed, at their urgent request, to three noble sisters, the sole inmates of a small cloister at Tarente in Dorset. The author has been conjectured to be Bishop Richard Poor, who was born at Tarente, who refounded the nunnery, and whose heart was buried there in 1237. Whoever he was, he has a vein of humour and at times a strain of simple devotional fervour, that more than compensate for the difficulty of the dialect. We conclude with a short extract illustrative of the former :

'Ȝe, mine leove sustren, voleweȝ ure lefdi, & nout þe kakelo Eve. Vor-þi ancre, hwat-se heo beo, also muchel ase heo ever con & mei,

¹ Professo. Skent goes so far as to print these in verse lines.

holde hire stille : nabbe heo nout henne kunde. Þe hen, hwon heo haveþ ileid, ne con buten kakelen. And hwat biȝit heo þer-of? Kumeþ þe coue anon-riht & reveþ hire hire eiren, & fret al þet of hwat heo schulde vorþ-bringen hire 'cwife briddes; & riht also þe lupere coue, deovel, beþ a-wei vrðm þe kakeliñde ancren & vðrswoluweþ al þet god þet heo istreoned habbeþ, þet schulden ase briddes beren ham up tonward heovene, ȝif hit nere icakeled. ¹

¹ 'Ye, my dear sisters, follow our lady, and not the cackling Eve. Therefore let an anchoress, whoever she be, keep herself as still as ever she can and may : let her not have the hen's nature. The hen, when she has laid, cannot but cackle. And what does she get thereby? Forthwith comes the chough and robs her of her eggs, and devours all that from which she should have brought forth her live young. And just so the wlokkðl chough, the devil, bears away from the cackling anchoress and swallows up all the good that she has begotten, that should like young birds rise up toward heaven, were it not for the cackling.'

CHAPTER III.

CHAUCER.

‘IF we ask ourselves wherein consists the immense superiority of Chaucer’s poetry over the romance-poetry, why it is that in passing from this to Chaucer we suddenly feel ourselves to be in another world, we shall find that his superiority is both in the substance of his poetry and in the style of his poetry. His superiority in substance is given by his large, free, simple, clear, yet kindly view of human life,—so unlike the total want, in the romance-poets, of all intelligent command of it. Chaucer has not their helplessness; he has gained the power to survey the world from a central, a truly human point of view. . . . Of his style and manner, if we think first of the romance-poetry and then of Chaucer’s divine liquidness of diction, his divine fluidity of movement, it is difficult to speak temperately. They are irresistible, and justify all the rapture with which his successors speak of his “gold dew-drops of speech.”’

The task that we set before ourselves in this chapter is to show the justice of this estimate of Chaucer’s poetry—his prose is ‘négligeable’—by one of the foremost critics of the nineteenth century. For this purpose we propose, after a brief sketch of his life, to deal with his principal works in chronological order, incidentally tracing them to their sources and remarking his growing freedom and originality in the use of his materials; to touch on his language and versification; and to attempt for ourselves an estimate of his literary position and greatness. With Chaucer we leave the Middle Ages behind. It is because of his unique historic position in the development of English poetry;

because he is divided by a greater gulf from his predecessors in the art than any other English poet; because he is our first national poet since the Conquest; that he bulks so largely in literary history and is deemed by us worthy of the greatest honour we can pay him here—a chapter to himself.

Geoffrey Chaucer¹ was the son of John and Agnes Chaucer. His father was a London vintner, who in 1338 attended Edward III. and his queen to Flanders and Cologne, so that their son was in some degree born into a courtly family. The exact year of his birth is not known, and has been the occasion of various surmises and much discussion. The old date, 1328, has been proved impossible. In 1386, in the trial of Scropo v. Grosvenor, in which Chaucer was a witness, he is described as 'del age de xl. ans et plus, armez par xxvii. ans' (of the age of forty and upwards, armed for twenty-seven years). This double statement, though vague and, if judged by other depositions of age made at the same trial, unreliable, seems to imply that Chaucer was not yet fifty; and, if we suppose that he first bore arms at the age of twenty (which cannot be very wide of the mark), gives us forty-seven as his age in 1386—that is, 1339 as his birth-year. This accords better than an earlier date with his service in the Countess of Ulster's household in 1357, and with the date of his first military campaign in France, 1359. On the other hand, it has been urged that, if he had only been forty-five in 1384, he could not have replied to the eagle in the 'House of Fame' (l. 995), that he was 'too old' to be instructed in star-lore. To this and other such objections it is responded that the average span of life was not nearly so long then as now, and that there are similar references to old age in the literature of the time. Finally, the birth-year 1339 fits in as well as any other with the date of Chaucer's first datable poem, the 'Book of the Duchess,' 1369, and generally with all the ascertainable dates of his literary life.

¹ He tells us both his Christian name and his surname in his works: see 'House of Fame' 720, and 'Canterbury Tales,' B. 47 (references are in every case to the Skene Chaucer in six vols., or to the Student's Chaucer). Earlier forms of the surname were I.e. Chauncier, Le Chauncer ('the hostler').

The details of Chaucer's life have been the object of careful and laborious investigation on the part of several scholars (among whom Sir Harris Nicholas holds an honoured place); but apart from a few main facts, they do not throw sufficient light on his poetic career to justify our dwelling on them at length. Geoffrey was certainly well educated; but the statement that he went to Cambridge University has no other foundation than the lines from the 'Court of Love' (now known not to be his):—

‘Philogenet I cald am fer and nere,
Of Cambridge clerke.’

Roughly it may be said that in the ten years from 1359 to 1369 Chaucer was engaged in the service of the court, with intervals of campaigning; that in the ten years beginning with 1370 he was frequently engaged on diplomatic and commercial missions abroad; and that in the ten years beginning with 1380 he was deep in the labours of authorship. From 1374 to 1391 he was more or less engrossed in official life at the customs, as Clerk of the King's Works, as a knight of the shire for Kent. It is thus evident that Chaucer's wide and varied reading, which he had in common with other writers of his century, was combined with an experience of life in various fields of activity, that places him in a class by himself among contemporary authors, and without which he could not possibly have held 'the mirror up to nature' as he did.

Some of the facts that have been summarised above must be chronicled separately, if categorically. Chaucer was taken prisoner in France in 1359, but was ransomed by the King, who contributed the equivalent of £240 of our present money, before the Treaty of Bretigny next year. In 1367 'valettus noster' Geoffrey Chaucer received a pension of twenty marks from the King. By 1369 Chaucer had risen to be 'a squire of less estate.' In 1373 he paid his first

First Visit
to Italy.

visit to Italy, for the purpose of arranging a commercial treaty with Genoa. This must have been a notable event in his life. It doubtless first brought him in touch with the splendid contemporary Italian poetry. Dante died in 1321, Petrarch in 1374, Boccaccio in 1375; so that the two last were still alive, and Florence, which

Chaucer visited, must have been ringing with their names. He probably went on to Padua and saw Petrarch, for there is no improbability in applying to Chaucer himself the statement of his clerk in the 'Canterbury Tales':

'I wol yow telle a tale which that I
Lerned at Padowe of a worthy clerk . . .
Fraunceys Petrark, the laurent poete' (E. 26-7, 31),

and we know that Petrarch was at this very time¹ engaged on his Latin translation of the story of Grisildis, from which Chaucer undoubtedly made his English version.

In 1374 the King, apparently in token of appreciation of Chaucer's diplomatic services, granted a daily Service of the State. pitcher of wine to 'dilecto Armigero nostro, Galfrido Chaucer'—a gift which the *dilectus Armiger* at a later date exchanged (perhaps wisely) for twenty marks a year. In the same year John of Gaunt granted him £10 a year for life, 'for the good service he and his wife Philippa' had rendered to the Duke and his relatives. From 1374 until the fall of his patron Gaunt from power in 1386, Chaucer was Comptroller of the Customs of wool, etc., in the Port of London, 'to write the rolls with his own hand, to be continually present,' etc. In 1382 he received in addition the Comptrollership of Petty Customs, with leave to discharge his duties by deputy—a permission, we imagine, that the sternest reformer could hardly find it in his heart to begrudge. Early in 1385 this permission was extended, so that he was allowed to appoint a permanent deputy at the Wool Customs; and no doubt he turned his new-found leisure to good account for his greatest work. In 1378 he had paid a second visit to Italy, in company with Sir E. Berkeley, in order to treat on military matters with Barnabo Visconti, Duke of Milan.² During his absence he named his brother poet, the 'moral Gower,' as one of his two attorneys or representatives. In 1386 he was elected a knight of the shire for Kent; possibly he had already gone to live at Greenwich.³ At the end of this year the misfortunes began, which haunted him intermittently until

¹ This is the most probable date of Petrarch's letter to Boccaccio, written soon after he made his Latin version of the story following Boccaccio's Italian version.

² See 'Canterbury Tales,' B. 858²-86.

³ See 'Envoy to Scogan,' 45.

death. The Duke of Gloucester seized the supreme power ; a commission was appointed in November to inquire into abuses ; there was great dissatisfaction with the Customs department, and Chaucer, among others, was deprived of his offices. He must have been in distress in 1388, for he sold two pensions of twenty marks each. However, while John of Gaunt was away in Spain¹ in 1389, Richard seized the reins of government, and Chaucer was made Clerk of the King's Works, with permission to perform his duties by deputy. But in 1391 he lost this appointment—no reason can be assigned—and thenceforward until the last year of his life he appears to have been in pecuniary difficulties, so that on two separate occasions he applied to the Exchequer for an advance of as small a sum as 6s. 8d. This was on account of a grant of £20 a year for life, made to him by Richard II. in 1384, and increased, in response to a petition, by a tun of wine annually in 1398. The accession of the son of his old patron Gaunt in 1399 put an end to Chaucer's difficulties, and four days after his accession Henry granted Chaucer an additional forty marks a year. But the poet only lived one year longer, dying (so the stone in Westminster Abbey states) October 25th, 1400.

Of Chaucer's wife and family our information is meagre in the extreme. Philippa Chaucer died in 1387 ; it is likely that she was the sister of John of Gaunt's third wife, Catherine de Roet. Chaucer speaks of himself in many passages of his works as 'one never crowned with happiness in love, as an alien from love's courts, one banished from his favour.'² In a well-known passage in the 'House of Fame' (ll. 560-6), he goes even further :

'Awak', to me he [the eagle] seyde,
Right in the same vois and stevene
That useth oon I coude nevere ;
And with that vois, soth for to sayn,
My minde cam to me agayn ;
For hit was goodly seyde to me,
So nas hit never went to be.'

¹ See 'Canterbury Tales,' B. 8560-80.

² See 'Book of the Duchess' 80-42, 'Parlement of Fowls, 157-61, etc ; also the remarks of the Merchant and the Host about their wives in the Prologue and Epilogue of the Merchant's Tale ('Canterbury Tales' E. 1218 ff., 2426 ff.), and the bitterly sarcastic Envoy to the Clerk's Tale ('Canterbury Tales,' E. 1177 ff.).

It seems equally impossible (says Professor Hales) that these passages have no personal significance, and that a pleasant construction can be put on them.

There is no more fascinating task in this most fascinating of all studies than to trace through Chaucer's works, in chronological order, his own simple, genial personality on the one hand, and his growing command of the resources of his art on the other. There is such a plethora of material for the purpose that the difficulty is always that of selecting and condensing rather than the opposite, and the most we can hope to do here is to set the student on the right lines to fulfil the task properly for himself. At the outset we are met by the question, How are Chaucer's works to be known?—a pertinent and necessary question, only recently admitting of a satisfactory answer. There is first of all Chaucer's own testimony, contained in three passages of his works: (a) in the 'Legend of Good Women,' 405-31 (A text); (b) in the 'Canterbury Tales,' B. 47-89; (c) in the 'Preces de Chaucer' (not certainly genuine) at the close of the Parson's Tale (I. 1085-7). The first is by far the most important, and we therefore quote it here:

'He made the book that hight the Hous of Fame,
And eek the Deeth of Blaunche the Duchesse,
And the Parlement of Foules, as I gesse,
And al the love of Palamon and Arcyte
Of Thebes, thogh the story is knowen lyte;
And many an ympne for your halydayes,
That highten Balades, Roundels, Virelayes;
And, for to speke of other besinesse,
He hath in prose translated Boëce
And of the Wreched Engendring of Mankinde,
As man may in pope Innocent y-finde;
And mad the Lyf also of seynt Cecyle;
He made also, goon sithen a greet whyl,
Origenes upon the Maudeleyne;
Him oghte now to have the lesse payne;
He hath mad many a lay and many a thing.'

Earlier in the same Prologue Chaucer had been charged by the God of Love:—

'Thou hast translated the Romauns of the Rose . . .
Hast thou nat mad in English eek the book
How that Crisseide Troilus forsook?'

Secondly, we have the testimony of Chaucer's earlier successors, imitators, and editors. Lydgate's list, in his 'Fall of Princes,' adds nothing to our information; but the invaluable testimony of the poet's great admirer Shirley, who died in 1456 at the age of ninety, of the scribes of the MSS., of Caxton, who edited the minor poems, and of Thynne, who made the first collected edition in 1532, adds several poems to the canon, while, on the other hand, the additions of the later sixteenth-century editors, Stowe and Speght, are in the main spurious. Two or three minor poems have been discovered in recent years. These, and indeed any poem attributed to Chaucer, must stand success-

fully a series of tests such as the following:
Tests of Genuine-ness.

(a) Chaucer never rimes *y* with *ye*; (b) he never rimes words in which the final *e* is etymological with words in which it has no etymological force or justification whatever; (c) he never uses assonances, such as 'shape,' 'make,' instead of rimes. (d) A work not written in Eastern Midland dialect cannot be Chaucer's, if, as is usually the case, the marks of dialect are ineradicable. (e) A rime-index has been compiled from Chaucer's certainly genuine poems, containing all the rimes that he is known to have used; any poem whose rimes departed widely from these would rightly be suspected. Any poem that satisfactorily passed such negative tests as these would then only have to produce sufficient positive evidence, in order to prove that it was not the work of an early imitator.

By such means as this the Chaucer canon has now come to be fairly settled, and we are in a position to give a list of his genuine works, of a few doubtful poems, and of the spurious works that were included in the canon by Tyrwhitt and by so recent an arch-heretic as the late Henry Morley. Where the dates are approximately known, they are added without argumentation. It is usual to divide Chaucer's work into three periods, and that arrangement we have followed, necessarily, however, without pledging ourselves that every undated poem is in its proper period. (1) The first period of authorship is that of *translation*; it terminates about the time of Chaucer's return from his second visit to Italy in 1378. It

has also been called his *French* period, because many of his translations were made from that language; but several were also made from Latin. Eustache Deschamps addressed a poem to Chaucer, in which, apparently with the mistaken intention of being complimentary, he adopted the refrain "Grant translateur, noble Geffroy Chaucier." (2) The second period is one of *imitation*, also called the *Italian* period, when the poet was for a time markedly under the spell of the great Italian poets of his century. It may be dated 1379-85. (3) The period of *original* work, or the period of *invention*, dating from 1386 to his death.

A. *Genuine Works.*

List of His (1) First Period (to 1378).

Works. 'Origines upon the Maudeleyne.' Lost.

'Book of the Lion.' Lost.

Translation of Innocent III.'s 'De Miseria Conditionis Humane.' Lost.

*¹ 'Romaunt of the Rose.'² Octosyllabic verse.

'A B C.' Eight-line stanza, riming *ababbcb*.

'Book of the Duchess,' 1369. Octosyllabic verse.

'Life of Saint Cecyle.' Chaucer's stanza.

'Twelve Tragedies' (part of 'Monk's Tale'). Same metre as 'A B C.'

'Story of Grisildis,' after 1373. Chaucer's stanza.

'Palamon and Arcite'³ (?). Chaucer's stanza.

'Complaint to Pity.' Chaucer's stanza.

'Story of Constance.' Chaucer's stanza.

(2) Second Period (1379—1385).

'Complaint to his Lady.' Various metres.

* 'Anelida and Arcite.' Various metres.

'Translation of Boethius.' Prose.

'Complaint of Mars.' Chaucer's stanza and a nine-line stanza.

'Troilus and Cressida.' Chaucer's stanza.

'Lines to Adam Scrivener.' Chaucer's stanza.

'Parliament of Fowls,' 1382. Chaucer's stanza (with a roundel).

¹ Works marked with an asterisk were left unfinished.

² LL. 1—1705 of the extant version are probably by Chaucer.

³ See quotation on p. 32, and Chaucer's 'Prologue and Knight's Tale,' ed. Wyatt, pp. 17, 18.

- * 'House of Fame,' 1384. Octosyllabic verse.
- * 'Legend of Good Women,' 1385. Heroic couplets.
- (3) Third Period (1386—1400).
- * 'Canterbury Tales.' Chiefly in heroic couplets and Chaucer's stanza.
- * 'Treatise on the Astrolabe,' 1391. Prose.
- 'Complaint of Venus,' 1393 (?).
- 'Envoy to Scogan,' 1393. Chaucer's stanza.
- 'Envoy to Bukton,' 1396. Same as 'A B C.'
- 'Complaint to his Purse,' 1399.

The following minor poems cannot be assigned with certainty to any period:—'The Former Age,' 'Fortune,' 'Truth,' 'Gentleness,' 'Lack of Steadfastness,' 'Merciless Beauty,' 'Balade to Rosamonde,' 'Proverbs of Chaucer.'

B. *Doubtful Poems.*

- 'An Amorous Complaint,' 'Against Women Unconstant' or 'Balade on Newfangelness,' 'Womanly "Noblesse"'—these three are probably genuine; 'Balade of Complaint,' 'Complaint to my Mortal Foe,' 'Complaint to my Loadstar.'

C. *Spurious Works.*

- (1) 'The Cuckoo and the Nightingale': un-Chaucerian rimes, no positive evidence; possibly Hoccleve's.
- (2) 'The Flower and the Leaf': ostensibly written by 'a gentlewoman'; language not earlier than middle of fifteenth century; un-Chaucerian rimes; contains the couplet—

'Eke there be knyghtes *old* of the garter
That in *hir* time did right worthily,'

although the Order of the Garter was founded only in 1349.

- (3) 'The Complaint of the Black Knight': by Lydgate.
- (4) 'The Court of Love': language of the sixteenth century; no syllabic final *es*.
- (5) 'Chaucer's Dream' (not the 'Book of the Duchess'): never attributed to Chaucer until 1598 (Speght's edition); late language, un-Chaucerian rimes.

To the ordinary reader Chaucer is the poet of the 'Canterbury Tales'; but the student of literature can by

no means afford to confine his attention to one work of so many-sided a genius as Chaucer, masterpiece though it be. On the other hand, our chief purpose in dealing briefly with certain works selected from his earlier periods will be to trace the growth of his genius and the development of his art, in order to appreciate duly the full fruition of the one and the perfect manifestation of the other in the 'Canterbury Tales.'

'Chaucer's translation of the "Romaunt of the Rose" is The 'Romaunt not remarkable only as making a landmark in of the Rose.' the refinement of our versification. It marks with equal significance the rise of a new spirit in English poetry, the importation of thoughts and themes from the Continent, announcing the approach of the Renaissance.'¹ The new 'thoughts and themes' were chiefly those of philosophy and satire; the philosophy, largely that of Boethius, filtering to Chaucer's mind at first through the 'Romaunt'; the satire being the poignant satire of Jean de Meung himself on love, chivalry, and the church, the cherished ideals of the middle ages. For the 'Roman de la Rose' was an even more momentous poem in European literature than Chaucer's translation was in that of England. In composition it is a unique poem. Guillaume de Lorris (1195—1260) a northern troubadour, or *trouvère*, wrote a fragment of 4,070 lines of an allegorical poem of love and chivalry of the kind then in vogue. Some forty years after another poet, Jean de Meung (1260—1320), who was born in the same year that Guillaume de Lorris died, completed the poem with an addition (18,002 lines) several times longer than the original fragment. While ostensibly maintaining the original allegory, the later author in reality totally changed the character of the poem by introducing both satirical discussions on politics and morals, and miscellaneous stories. This heterogeneous composition nevertheless became one of the two greatest poems of the thirteenth century, so that Professor Saintsbury says that for two hundred years at least hardly anybody wrote a love-poem in England or France which was not in some degree an offspring of the 'Roman de la Rose.'

¹ 'History of English Poetry,' i. 258.

'There is perhaps no other single work,' he adds, 'which lets us see so clearly what the later middle ages thought about science, politics, and many other things.' By translating this work, therefore, Chaucer not only made himself a facile versifier, not only stored his memory with things old and new for future use, but showed himself to be a representative man of his time.

Chaucer's first important poem, that is not a mere translation, is the 'Death of Blanche,' or the 'Book of the Duchess,' 1369. 'Book of the Duchess,' composed to celebrate the sad death, in the prime of her youth and beauty, of his patron John of Gaunt's first wife. It consists of a 'proem' (ll. 1—290) and a 'dream' (ll. 291—1334). The opening lines of the proem, as well as the name 'Eciympasteur' (l. 167), were borrowed from Froissart's 'Le Paradys d'Amours.' In the proem, the poet, being unable to sleep, sat up in bed and read 'a book, a romaunce,' which proves to be Ovid's 'Metamorphoses,' from which he tells us the story of Alcyone mourning for the loss of Ceyx.¹ He probably took the suggestion for both parts of the poem from Guillaume de Machault's 'Dit de la Fontaine Amoureuse,' which also contains the story of Ceyx and Alcyone. The somewhat lengthy 'dream' does not hold the reader spell-bound; indeed, its rather threadbare 'plot' is not worth retailing. Line 948 indubitably connects the elegy with the Duchess *Blanche*:

'And gode faire WHYTE she hete (*was called*).'

Chaucer's octosyllabic couplets, though not always scanning with perfect regularity and smoothness,² show an enormous advance on the octosyllabics of the romance poetry, in keeping to the proper number of syllables, in the use of 'overflow' (*enjambement*),³ and in often placing the caesura in the middle of a foot.

The idea of translating the 'De Consolatione Philosophiae' of Boethius, which had been translated into French by Jean de Meung, was doubtless suggested to Chaucer by

¹ Cf. 'In youthe he made of Ceyx and Alcion' ('Canterbury Tales', B. 57). This may refer to an earlier poem, afterwards embodied here.

² 'Though som vers falle in a sillable' ('House of Fame', 1009).

³ 'The sense variously drawn out from one verse into another' (Milton).

the 'Roman de la Rose'¹; it supplied him with numerous philosophical motives for his later poetry. He made his translation from the original Latin with the aid of Jean de Meung's French version; or probably it would be more correct to say he translated Jean de Meung with references to the original; he certainly blunders most frequently when he departs from a literal rendering of the French. 'Chaucer's Words unto Adam,' his scrivener—

'Adam scriveyn, if ever it thee befallle
Boece or Troilus to wryten newe —

make it probable that 'Troilus' was the first poem he wrote after completing this translation, and this supposition is borne out by the number of passages in the former suggested by the latter: for example, 'Troilus,' iv. 963—1078 is a pretty close rendering from Boethius. Similarly, a long speech towards the close of the 'Knight's Tale' (ll. 2987 ff.) is from the same source; the poem 'The Former Age' is a poetical rendering of the fifth Metre of the second book of Boethius;² and the four poems which are commonly classed with the last-named—'Fortune,' 'Truth,' 'Gentleness,' and 'Lack of Steadfastness'—are all indebted to the same source for poetical ideas. Thus from one point of view alone—that of Chaucer's future work—the importance of his 'Boece' is manifest.

If the 'Canterbury Tales' be reckoned but a fragment—

'Troilus and Cressida' and they are but an insignificant fragment in comparison with the original design—'Troilus and Cressida' is Chaucer's longest complete work. It consists of over 8000 lines, divided into five books. Its source is undoubtedly the 'Filostrato' of Boccaccio; of the 5,700 lines that make up that poem Chaucer has borrowed less than half, and thus fully two-thirds of the lines in 'Troilus and Cressida' are original. But, manifest as his debt to Boccaccio is, Chaucer has seen fit to ignore it—in fact, nowhere in the whole of his works does he once men-

¹ Boece on the Consolation of Philosophy, and the opinions which are found therein, which any one who would well translate for them, would confer much benefit on the unlearned folk' ('Roman de la Rose,' 5053-50).

² Jean de Meung no doubt suggested this poem to Chaucer by his similar treatment of the same passage in the 'Roman de la Rose,' 8325—8406.

tion his name.¹ The truth is that he deliberately mystified his readers. He is translating 'out of Latin,' and 'mine author' is 'called Lollius,' forsooth!² The reason for this mystification is well given by Mr. G. C. Macaulay: 'The Trojan War was a matter of too serious historical importance, especially for the dwellers in "Brutes Albion," to be made the subject of a purely fictitious narrative. What was related of it must have at least the semblance of historical truth. . . . Boccaccio could afford to dispense with any such support and rely simply on the literary merit of his story; but not so Chaucer, whose public is at least a century behind. He might be satisfied himself to translate the "Filostrato" and ask no questions; but for the sake of his readers he is obliged to cite something of more respectable antiquity, and he gives them Lollius, as good a name as any other.'

This long and charming poem—which is only just beginning to receive the appreciation it deserves, because it is only since the publication of the Skeat 'Chaucer' that we have possessed a reliable critical text—has some other points of special interest. The fifty-eighth, fifty-ninth, and sixtieth stanzas of the first book appear to be our poet's only direct borrowing (beside the 'Clerk's Tale') from Petrarch, of whose eighty-eighth sonnet they are a translation. The main love-story was taken by Shakespeare as the groundwork of his play of the same name. The Scotch poet Henryson, in the following century, was so dissatisfied with the conclusion of his predecessor's work, which leaves the false Cressida living with Diomedes while Troilus is slain in battle, that he wrote a different conclusion, or supplement, to the poem, called 'The Testament of Cressid,' which was considered to be so great an addition to the interest of the story that it was included in all early editions of Chaucer's poems after 1532, and in that uncritical age seemed likely to be permanently fathered on him. In the last stanza but one 'Troilus' is 'directed' to 'moral Gower'—'moral,' pre-

¹ It has in consequence been supposed that he was ignorant of the name of the poet from whom he borrowed; but this is too ridiculous, seeing that Chaucer visited Italy when Boccaccio was at the height of his fame.

² See 'Troilus,' ll. 14, i. 804, and v. 1658.

sumably, with special reference to his 'Speculum Meditantis' or to his 'Vox Clamantis':

'O moral Gower, this book I directe
To thee, and to the philosophical Strode' (v. 1856-7).

Gower repaid the compliment in the Prologue to his 'Confessio Amantis' (1385):

'And grete wel Chaucer, whan ye mete,
As my [Venus] disciple and my poete;'

but at a later date he removed the passage, possibly because of Chaucer's strictures in the Introduction to the 'Man of Law's Prologue.'¹ One other passage in 'Troilus' merits quoting in full:

'Go, litel book, go litel myn tregedie,
Ther god thy maker yet, er that he dye,
So sende might to maken *som comedie*!
But litel book, no making thou nenvye,
But subgit be to alle poesye;
And kis the steppes, wher-as thou seest pace
Virgile, Ovyde, Omer, Lucan, and Stace.

And for ther is so greet diversitee
In English and in wryting of our tonge,
So preye I god that noon miswryte thee,
Ne thee mismetre for defaute of tonge.
And red wher-so thou be, *or elles songe*,
That thou be understonde I god beseche!
But yet to purpos of my rather speche' (v. 1786-99).

'Or elles songe' shows us that minstrelsy was not yet dead; quite possibly Chaucer looked for a larger public of listeners than of readers. The 'som comedie' is no doubt what Lydgate calls 'Dant in English'—the 'House of Fame,' a medieval comedy on the model of Dante's great work.

But between 'Troilus' and this, or perhaps interrupting 'Parliament of 'Troilus' and completed before it, comes the 'Fowls.' 'Parliament (or Assembly) of Fowls,' written in 1382 to celebrate Richard II.'s marriage with Anne of Bohemia on January 14th in that year. The 'plot' of the poem may be briefly stated. It is St. Valentine's Day, and the birds are assembled—it is needless to say that it is all a *dream*, and the dream is dreamt in the summer, not

¹ 'Canterbury Tales,' B. 77—89.

on Valentine's Day—before the goddess Nature, 'the vicar of the Almighty Lord,' for the purpose of choosing their mates. Nature holds a 'formel'¹ eagle on her wrist, for whose hand three royal birds, 'tercel'¹ eagles, make suit. Ultimately Nature leaves the decision with the formel, who requests a year's delay. This is an allegory of the wooing of Anne by three royal suitors, Richard II. of England, a Prince of Bavaria, and a Margrave of Meissen; she seems to have been betrothed to both of the latter before she finally bestowed her hand on Richard. It is 'the first of the Minor Poems which exhibits the influence upon Chaucer of Italian literature'; 'it is also the first of the Minor Poems in which touches of true humour occur.'² Its sources are manifold. 'It shows us,' says Courthope (speaking of the 'Book of the Duchess,' but the remark is at least equally true of this poem), 'that his earliest method of composition was to elaborate a central idea on the lines suggested to him by a contemporary poet, and to support and embellish this with subsidiary ideas derived from other literary sources.' The 'central idea' in this case was taken from the fabliau 'Hueline et Eglantine,' and some of the 'subsidiary ideas' were these: the imagery of the allegory and the description of Nature from the 'De Planctu Naturae' of Alain de l'Isle; a summary of Cicero's 'Somnium Scipionis' from Macrobius (this opens Chaucer's poem and sets *him* a-dreaming); reminiscences of Dante and Claudian; sixteen consecutive stanzas (ll. 183—294) from Boccaccio's 'Teseide,' from which he afterwards took his 'Knight's Tale'; and a list of trees (ll. 176-82) with a remarkable history.³

The 'House of Fame' is Chaucer's last poem in octosyllabic couplets; his next work—the Legend of Good Women, 1385—is his first in rimed pentameters, or heroic couplets, also called Chaucer's 'riding rime' because it is the metre in which he describes the pilgrims in the general Prologue to the 'Canterbury

¹ The male was called *tercel*, because it was supposed to be a third smaller than the female. Why the female was called *formel* is uncertain.

² Professor Skeat refers to ll. 498—500, 508, 514-16, 563-75, 598—616.

³ This list occurs first in Ovid's 'Metamorphoses,' then by successive borrowings in Seneca, Lucan, Statius, Claudian, Boccaccio, Guillaume de Lorris, Chaucer (here and in the 'Knight's Tale'), Tasso, and Spenser.

Tales. The importance of this fact in the dating of the poet's works is obvious. We have seen that Lydgate calls the 'House of Fame' 'Dant in English.' Dante is mentioned in it (l. 450), and is the source of its inspiration. 'Dante begins his third book, "Il Paradiso," with an invocation to Apollo, and Chaucer likewise begins his third book with the same; moreover, Chaucer's invocation is little more than a translation of Dante's. . . . Both poets mark the exact date of commencing their poems; Dante descended into the Inferno on Good Friday 1300; Chaucer began his work on December 10th, the year being probably 1383 (l. 111). . . . Chaucer's eagle is also Dante's eagle. . . . Chaucer's steep rock of ice corresponds to Dante's steep rock. . . . Chaucer copies from Dante his description of Statius, and follows his mistake in saying that he was born at Toulouse (l. 1460). . . . Chaucer's error of making Marsyas a female arose from his misunderstanding the Italian form Marsia in Dante (l. 1229).'¹ But the suggestion of the building which gives its name to the poem came from the twelfth book of Ovid's 'Metamorphoses,' and the description of Fame herself is from the fourth book of the 'Aeneid.'²

The 'House of Fame' is in three books of unequal length, each commencing with an invocation. The first book contains a disquisition on dreams. The poet sleeps and dreams. He is in a temple of glass, and sees on a tablet the opening lines of the 'Aeneid.' Then follows a summary of Virgil's poem, probably to Chaucer recent 'treasure trove,' to which Dante had directed him. In the second book, an eagle swoops down on him and bears him towards the stars. In the delightful conversation between them, which is maintained chiefly by the eagle (who is emphatically master of the situation) and which constitutes the most interesting part of the poem, the poet reveals himself more intimately to us than he does anywhere else, and with touches of enchanting humour:

'Thus I longe in his clawes lay,
Til at the laste he to me spak

¹ The Skent 'Chaucer,' vol. 2, vii., viii., based on an article by Rambaud in 'Englische Studien,' iii. 209.

² Cf. II. 1805 ff. with 'Aeneid,' iv. 178-83.

In mannes vois, and seyde, "Awak!
 And be not so a-gast, for shame!" . . .
 And sayde twyës, "Seynte Marie!
 Thou art noyous for to carie." . . .
 "O god," thoughte I, "that madest kinde,
 Shal I non other weyesdye?
 Wher Ioves wol me stellifye,
 Or what thing may this signifye?
 I neither am Enoch, nor Elye,
 Ne Romulus, no Ganymede
 That was y-bore up, as men rede,
 To herene with dan Iupiter,
 And maad the goddes boteler." . . .
 "Thou demest of thy-self amis;
 For Ioves is not ther-about—
 I dar wel putte thee out of doute—
 To make of thee as yet a sterre.
 Ioves halt hit greet humblesse
 And vertu eek, that thou wolt make
 A-night ful ofte thyn heed to ake,
 In thy studie so thou wrytest. . . .
 But of thy verray neyghbores,
 That dwellen almost at thy dores,
 Thou herest neither that ne this;
 For whan thy labour doon al is,
 And hast y-maad thy rekeninges,
 In stede of reste and newe thinges,
 Thou gost hoom to thy hous anon;
 And, also dumb as any stoon,
 Thou sittest at another boke,
 Til fully dawed is thy loke,
 And livest thus as an hermyte,
 Although thyn abstinence is lyte.
 And therfor Ioves, through his grace,
 Wol that I bere thee to a place,
 Which that hight **THE HOUSE OF FAME**,
 To do thee som disport and game" (ll. 554—661).

A little later Chaucer declines a lesson in star-lore from the eagle on the ground of age:

"Wilt thou lere of sterres aught?"
 "Nay, certeinly," quod I, "right naught;
 And why? for I am now to old" (ll. 993-95).¹

In such goodly company and with the journey thus beguiled the poet reaches the House of Fame.

The third book describes the House, built upon a rock of

¹ See p. 28.

ice, with one face ever melting in the sun, the other in the shade inscribed with names of eternal fame. Upon the pillars that supported the House Chaucer saw those whom we must hence regard as his literary heroes: Josephus, Homer, Dares, Dictys, 'Lollius,' Guido delle Colonne, and Geoffrey of Monmouth, Virgil, Ovid, Lucan, and Claudian (who wrote 'De Raptu Proserpinae'). Companies of suppliants are besieging the goddess for fame, ill fame, or no fame, and their requests are answered at her mere caprice, through the two trumpets, 'clear laud' and slander, of the god Aeolus. Thence the poet is taken to the House of Rumour, sixty miles long, and full from end to end of 'jangles

'Of werre, of pees, of mariages,
Of reste, of labour, of viages,
Of abood, of deeth, of lyfe,
Of love, of hate, acorde, of stryfe' (ll. 1961-64),

and of many other things too numerous to quote. This third part, which is equal in length to the first two, is incomplete; indeed, it has been said that to this mock-heroic of an unseen world no satisfactory artistic conclusion was possible.

The 'Legend of Good Women' is a recantation of the heresies of the 'Romaunt of the Rose' and 'The Legend of Good Women,' 'Troilus and Cressida'—both of them poems 1235. antagonistic in tone to mediæval chivalry and the Courts of Love, both of them giving strong indications of the new satirical spirit in literature. Hence the 'Legend' is the less interesting to us because it stands for a temporal and partial set-back, under court influence, in Chaucer's development. How this influence was exerted we see in the Prologue, by far the best part of the poem. It is extant in two recensions, an earlier and a later, of which the former is not only original but at least equal to the latter in workmanship. We quote a well-known autobiographical passage in its earlier and less familiar setting:

'And, as for me, though that my wit be lyte,
On bokes for to rede I me delyte,
And in myn herte have hem in reverence;
And to hem yere swich lust and swich credence,
That ther is wel unethe game noon

That from my bokes make me to goon,
 But hit be oþer up-on the baly-day,
 Or elles in the Ioly tyme of May;
 Whan that I here the smale foules singe,
 And that the floures ginno for to springe,
 Farwel my studie, as lasting that sesoun !' (ll. 29—39).

The god of love charges the poet with the translation and composition of heretical works, the 'Romaunt' and 'Troilus'; but 'Alceste' interposes in his defence with a list of the poet's works¹ in which he has served Cupid well, and he is let off with the easy penance of writing the 'legends' of women who have been betrayed by men. That his fair advocate is none other than Richard II.'s 'good queen Anne' is clear from some lines in the later text of the Prologue:

'Go now thy way, this penance is but lyte.
 And whan this booke is maad, yive hit the quene
 On my behalfe, at Eltham or at Shene' (ll. 195-97).

Of the twenty legends which Chaucer was bidden to write we are not overcome with regret that he completed only nine (or ten if we count 'Hypsipyle and Medea' as two)—those of Cleopatra, Thisbe, Dido, Hypsipyle and Medea, Lucretia, Ariadne, Philomela, Phyllis, Hypermnestra. His sources were Virgil (for Dido); Ovid's 'Metamorphoses' and 'Heroides'; Boccaccio's 'De Claris Mulieribus' and 'De Genealogia Deorum'; and Guido's 'Historia Trojana' (for Jason's victims).

We have seen incidentally how great must have been Chaucer's debt to the leaders of the earlier Renaissance movement in Italy: Dante (1265—1321), Petrarch (1304-74), Boccaccio (1313-75). In coming under the influence of these men and their works he came into living contact with the one great movement in the world of letters of his day. To Petrarch, although he met and admired him, Chaucer owes little, both in the way of influence and in direct borrowings; in truth, it may be doubted whether he had more in common with Petrarch than with Dante. He mentions Dante five times, Petrarch twice, Boccaccio not at all (except under the disguise of 'Lollius'), and it is quite in accordance

¹ Quoted *in extenso* on p. 32.

with the medieval ethics of plagiarism that these figures give us no clue as to what Chaucer owed to them respectively. His direct borrowings from Dante are slight and are reconceived in a spirit alien to the original; the highest influence under which he came was not the predominant one in his later works. From Boccaccio he borrowed, without acknowledgment, some of the tragedies of his 'Monk's Tale,' 'all the love of "Palamon and Arcite"'"¹ (if we are to understand thereby a poem distinct from both 'Anelida and Arcite' and the 'Knight's Tale'), and the suggestion and about a third of the material of his 'Troilus and Cressida' and 'Knight's Tale'—the last two respectively from the Italian's 'Filostrato' and 'Teseide.' It has often been too readily assumed that Chaucer's indebtedness bulks still larger, and that not only the suggestion for the framework of his 'Canterbury Tales,' but no inconsiderable part of the material, came to him from Boccaccio. But it cannot be proved, as we shall see anon, that he ever felt directly the influence of that work on which Boccaccio's fame endures—the immortal 'Decamerone.'

Collections of tales had been made in the East even before the Christian era, and had thence found 'The Canterbury Tales.' their way to the West, where new collections were in the course of time made. Familiar examples of the two classes are the 'Arabian Nights' and the 'Gesta Romanorum.' Originally, both in the East and in the West, tales had been intended and used principally 'to point a moral'; later, they came to be told for their own sake. The fictions which were invented to link together the various stories in a collection, and to account for the telling of so many in succession, were originally extremely naive and improbable, and herein Chaucer shows as great an advance on Gower, and even on Boccaccio, as the latter shows on all his predecessors in the art. Gower is still telling his tales, sometimes grossly immoral ones, with an ostensibly moral purpose; Chaucer tells his for their intrinsic interest, with the added charm of artistic skill in the telling. 'Boccaccio . . . placed the scene of his "Decameron" in a garden, to which seven fashionable ladies

¹ See the list of Chaucer's works quoted on p. 32 from his 'Legend of Good Women'

had retired with three fashionable gentlemen during the plague that devastated Florence in 1348. They told one another stories, usually dissolute, often witty, sometimes exquisitely poetical, and always in simple charming prose. The purpose of these people was to forget the duties on which they had turned their backs, and stifle any sympathies they might have had for the terrible griefs of their friends and neighbours who were dying a few miles away.¹

We can now see how far Chaucer's scheme or framework for a collection of tales marks an advance on any work that he could have taken as his model. It is possible that he was urged on to the work by Gower's success in what has been called 'the first great collection of tales in the English language,' the 'Confessio Amantis.' But all Gower's stories are told by one person, Genius, the priest or confessor of Venus, and all with one purpose, to illustrate all the vices of which the confessing lover could conceivably have been guilty. Boccaccio's fugitives from the plague are all of the same age and belong to the same social caste. Chaucer alone adopted the happy and brilliant suggestion of bringing his story-tellers together for a common purpose of such a nature that it united 'all sorts and conditions of men' and women in unstrained and unrestrained intercourse. But it would be too daringly original even for a man of Chaucer's parts, though living in an age of pilgrimages, possibly seeing pilgrims to Canterbury pass his own house almost every week in the year, and probably himself taking part in one, to select a pilgrimage as the connecting bond of his story-tellers without external suggestion! Boccaccio's company fleeing from the plague *may* have suggested Chaucer's company returning thanks to 'the hooly blisful martir. . . . That hem hath holpen whan that they were seekē.' Langland's pilgrimage to Saint Truth *may* have suggested Chaucer's pilgrimage to St. Thomas of Canterbury. Yes, they *may*; just as they have suggested themselves to people who must go grubbing for sources for everything. The degree of probability we are content to leave to the reader.

¹ Morley's 'First Sketch,' p. 168.

If Chaucer himself made a pilgrimage to Canterbury, it was most likely in 1385 or 1387. In April ^{The Pilgrimage.} 1385 he had lately been released from personal attendance at the Wool Customs, and would naturally be in the very mood for what he no doubt regarded primarily as a holiday jaunt. That he had the details of a pilgrimage of his own in mind when he planned his series of tales, is far easier to believe than the contrary. On April 16th, 1385 or 1387, then—we know the date of the month from internal evidence; April 16th was a Sunday in 1385, a Tuesday in 1387—we may assume that the pilgrims assembled at the Tabard Inn, Southwark, started in the morning of the 17th, and reached Canterbury on the 20th. The outward journey thus occupied four days, three nights being spent on the road—at least, this supposition tallies best, as we shall see, with the internal allusions to time and locality, as well as with the recorded journeys of Queen Isabella in 1358 and King John of France in 1360. These potentates halted for a night at Dartford, at Rochester, and at Ospringe; doubtless the pilgrims did the same; the latter also indulged in a midday meal at Sittingbourne on the third day.

It is needless to tell in detail here what the student must read for himself in the 'Prologue': how Harry Bailey, the host of the Tabard, proposed that each pilgrim should tell two tales on the way to Canterbury and two more on the return journey; that he himself should accompany them at his own expense, and act as guide and judge; and that the teller of the best tale should in the end be feasted (of course at the Tabard) at the expense of the rest—all which was unanimously adopted by the company. The number of pilgrims was 'wel nyne-and-twenty' (exactly twenty-nine),¹ including Chaucer, but excluding the Host and the Canon's Yeoman, the latter of whom joined the company on the road and told a tale. The original scheme, therefore, as given in the 'Prologue,' contemplated at least one hundred and twenty tales. But in the 'Franklin's Headlink'

¹ This is on the not improbable supposition that the 'preestes thre' of the 'Prologue,' l. 161, is a hurried insertion for the sake of the rhyme at the place where the character of the Nun may have originally stood. Subsequently we read of one priest only (see B. 3998—4000).

(F. 673—708)—and the fact has hardly received the attention it deserves—Chaucer seems to be already aware that some modification of his original plan may be necessary, for he makes the Host say (F. 696-98):

'What, frankeleyn? pardee, sir, wel thou wost
That eche of yow mot tellen atte leste
A tale or two, or breken his libeste.

And lines 16—19 and 25 of 'The Parson's Prologue' (the Host is speaking)—

'Now lakketh us no tales mo than oon.
Fulfilde is my sentence and my decree;
I trowe that we han herd of ech degree.
Almost fulfilde is al myn ordinaunce, . . .
For every man save thou hath told his tale'—

show clearly that Chaucer had by this time modified his plan at least to the telling of *one* tale only by each pilgrim on each journey, and even this 'tale' of tales is incomplete for the outward journey alone, and he does not even make his pilgrims reach Canterbury.

We have in all twenty-four tales or fragments of tales to divide among thirty pilgrims (including now the Canon's Yeoman). Seven members of the company (the five burghesses among the number) are altogether silent, but Chaucer himself makes two attempts, so that the numbers tally. Chaucer is unpardonably interrupted (although the interruption is in excellent taste from the poet's own point of view) by the Host in his first attempt, 'The Rime of Sir Thopas,' an inimitable burlesque of the romances of his day, and substitutes the wearisome prose tale of 'Melibous.' Of the other tales the Parson's alone is in prose. Besides the truncated 'Sir Thopas,' the 'Squire's Tale' is 'left half told,' and the Cook's is a mere fragment.

The 'Canterbury Tales' consist of a large number of poems written specially for the series, and of a smaller number of old poems, some of which were rewritten or altered or added to. The early 'Life of St. Cecile' became the 'Second Nun's Tale'; 'The Story of Grisildis' became, with the addition of two stanzas and the Envoy, the famous 'Clerk's Tale'; the 'Story of Constance' became the 'Man of Law's Tale'; the 'Twelve

Tragedies' formed the bulk of the 'Monk's Tale' (of which the Knight 'stinted' him).¹ These four tales are in stanzas, and no other tales are in stanzas except 'Sir Thopas' and the Prioress's. Hence a metrical canon has been proposed which, if correct, divides the later from the earlier tales by the test of metre. There is good reason for believing that decasyllabic riming couplets were first used in English poetry in the 'Legend of Good Women,' which dates from about 1385. The canon therefore runs thus: 'All of the "Canterbury Tales" written in this metre were written after 1385, whilst those not in this metre were mostly earlier, though two of them and a part of some others appear to be later.' This is in all probability true. Part of the 'Monk's Tale,' although in stanzas, must have been written after 1385, because it celebrates the death of Barnabo Visconti, who died in that year. There is also no reason to doubt that 'Sir Thopas' and the 'Prioress's Tale,' both in stanzas, were written specially for their places in the 'Canterbury Tales,' and therefore after 1385. Two tales are in prose. The remaining sixteen are in rimed couplets.

Deferring criticism to the close of the chapter it only remains for us here to give the groups into
Groups of Tales:
Notes of Time
and Place. which the 'Tales' fall, with the data on which the grouping rests, and the sources from which Chaucer appears to have drawn his plots. The work has come down to us as a series of more or less disconnected groups of tales, with, however, several prologues and connecting links containing allusions to other tales and notes of time and locality. The order of the 'Tales' varies considerably in different manuscripts, and it required much patience and careful investigation, on the part of Dr. Furnivall and the late Mr. Bradshaw, to ascertain, by means of the internal evidence, what tales preceded or followed other tales—that is to say, what inter-connected tales made up the various disconnected groups, and the right order of the groups themselves. In the end the following result has been generally agreed upon (the indications, of time and locality are given in their place):

¹ Moreover, 'Palamon and Arcite' (if it ever existed) was rewritten in couplets (in place of stanzas) as the 'Knight's Tale.'

April 17. GROUP A.¹

'General Prologue.'

'Knight's Tale.'

'Miller's Prologue and Tale.'

'Reeve's Prologue and Tale.'

'Lo, Depesford [Deptford], and it is *half wey prime* [= 7.30 a.m.].

Lo, *Grenewych* [Greenwich], ther many a shrewe is inne'

(A. 3906-7).

'Cook's Prologue and Tale.'

April 18. GROUP B.

'Man of Law's Head-link, Prologue, and Tale.'

'Oure Hoste saugh wel that the brighte sonne

The ark of his artificial day hath ronne

The ferthe part, and half an houre and moore [= 10 a.m.],

And though he were nat depe experte in loore,

He wiste it was *the eightetelthe day* [= 18th April]

Of Aprill that is messenger to May' (B. 1-6).

'Shipman's Prologue and Tale.'

'Prioress's Prologue and Tale.'

'Prologue to, and Tale of, Sir Thopas.'

'Prologue to, and Tale of, Melibeus.'

'Monk's Prologue and Tale.'

'Loo, *Roucheestre* [Rochester] stant heer faste by I' (B. 3116).

'Nun's Priest's Prologue, Tale, and Epilogue.'

April 19. GROUP C.²

'Doctor's Tale, and Words of the Host.'

'Pardoner's Prologue and Tale.'

GROUP D.

'Wife of Bath's Prologue and Tale.'

'Er I come to *Sidyngborne* [Sittingbourne]' (D. 847).

'Friar's Prologue and Tale.'

'Summoner's Prologue and Tale.'

'My tale is doon ; we been almoost at *towne* [Sittingbourne]'

(D. 2294).

¹ These groups are now all but universally adopted, and thus reference to any passage is facilitated, because the groups and lines do not vary in different editions. See the 'Student's Chaucer' (Oxford Press, 7s. 6d.).

² As this group contains no notes of time or place, its position cannot be assigned with certainty. Nothing was gained by removing it from its place in the Ellesmere manuscript between F. and G.

GROUP E.

'Clerk's Prologue and Tale.'

'Merchant's Prologue, Tale, and Epilogue.'

[There are no notes of time or place in this group, but there are two or three allusions to 'The Wife of Bath's Prologue,' showing that this group follows Group D. See E. 1170, 1685, 2438.]

April 20. GROUP F.

'Squire's Prologue and Tale.'

I wol nat taryen yow, *for it is pryve* [= 9 a.m.] (F. 73).

'Franklin's Head-link, Prologue and Tale.'

GROUP G.

'Second Nun's Prologue and Tale.'

'Canon's Yeoman's Prologue and Tale.'

'Whan toold was al the lyf of Seinte Cecile,
*Er we hadde riden fully fyve mile,
At Boughton-under-Blee*' (G. 554-6).

'Sires, now in the morwe tyde,
Out of youre hostelrye I saugh you ryde' (G. 588-99).

[The Canon's Yeoman, overtaking the pilgrims at Boughton-under-Blean, five miles from the place where they had passed the night, says he had seen them ride out of their hostelry that morning.]

GROUP H.

'Manciple's Prologue and Tale.'

'Woot ye nat where ther stant a litel toun,
Which that y-cleped is *Bobbo-up-and-down*,
Under the Blee [Blean Forest] *in Caunterbury weye*?
Ther ganoure hooste for to jape and pleye' (H. 1-4).

What eyeth thee to slepe by *the morwe* [morning]? (H. 16).

GROUP I.

'Parson's Prologue and Tale.'

'*Fourre of the clokke* it was tho, as I gesse' [4 p.m.] (I. 5).

The sources of the 'Canterbury Tales' cannot be adequately discussed here, and will therefore be best given in categorical form:

The 'Knight's Tale' of Palamon and Arcite, taken from Boccaccio's 'Teseide' (see p. 46); the opening

Sources of the
'Canterbury
Tales.'

is from the 'Thebaid' of Statius, which was also one of Boccaccio's authorities.

The 'Miller's Tale' of the Oxford Student and the Carpenter: source unknown, probably a fabliau: similar stories found in German and Italian, but only in collections of later date.

The 'Reeve's Tale' of the two Cambridge Students and the Miller of Trumpington, taken from a French fabliau, which must have been very similar to versions which are still extant.

The 'Cook's Tale' (only fifty-eight lines completed) of Perkin Revelour, the apprentice: source unknown, probably a fabliau.

The 'Man of Law's Tale' of the fortitude of Constance, taken from the Anglo-French Chronicle of Nicholas Trivet, a Dominican friar: about one-third of the lines are original.

The 'Shipman's Tale' of the Monk and the Merchant's Wife: source some French fabliau; similar story in the 'Decamerone,' viii. 1.

The 'Prioress's Tale' of a Christian boy killed by Jews, taken from two 'Miracles of our Lady,' in French verse, by Gautier de Coinci.

Chaucer's 'Tale of Sir Thopas' is a burlesque of the romances of the time.

Chaucer's 'Tale of Melibeus' is a translation of 'Le Livre de Melibee et de dame Prudence,' itself a translation (probably by Jean de Meung) of the 'Liber Consolationis et Consilii' of Albertano of Brescia.

The 'Monk's Tale' consists of seventeen 'Tragedies,' taken from various sources, which include the Bible and Apocrypha, Boccaccio's 'De Casibus Virorum Illustrium' and 'De Claris Mulieribus,' Boethius, the 'Romaunt of the Rose,' and Dante's 'Inferno' (for Ugolino of Pisa).

The 'Nun's Priest's Tale' of the Cock and the Fox, taken from a fable of thirty-eight lines by Marie de France, 'Dou Coc et dou Werpil' or from the later 'Roman de Renart.'

The 'Doctor's Tale' of Appius and Virginia, taken from the 'Romaunt of the Rose' (the professed obligation to Livy is itself taken, à la Chaucer, from the same source)

The 'Pardoner's Tale' of the three Rioters seeking Death, probably taken from the 'Cento Novelle Antiche,' but ultimately coming from the Buddhist story, 'Vedabbha Jātaka,' in the Pāli Jātaka-book.

For the 'Wife of Bath's Prologue' suggestions were taken from Theophrastus 'De Nuptiis,' the 'Epistola Valerii ad Rufinum de non ducenda uxore,' St. Jerome 'Contra Jovinianum,' and the 'Romaunt of the Rose.'

The 'Wife's Tale' of the Knight and the Loathly Lady, ultimately from the same source (not known) as Gower's 'Story of Florent.'

The 'Friar's Tale' of the Summoner and the Devil: similar stories, told in one case of a seneschal and in another of a lawyer, are found in medieval books called 'Promptuarium Exemplorum.'

The 'Summoner's Tale' of the Friar's Legacy, taken from 'Li Dis de la Vescie a Prestre' (the priest's bladder).

The 'Clerk's Tale' of the Patience of Griselda, from Petrarch's 'De obedientia et fide uxoria Mythologia,' a Latin version of the last tale in the 'Decamerone,' the earliest extant form of which is found in an Early French story.

The 'Merchant's Tale' of January and May: there are several close analogues in medieval Latin fables; one in 'Comoedia Lydine' consists of seventy-two elegiac lines, and is followed in Boccaccio's 'Decamerone'; another, of thirty-six elegiac lines, is the first fable in the collection of a certain Adolphus, 1315 (this is the closer parallel, for in the former the husband is not blind).

The 'Squire's Tale' of 'Cambuscan bold': immediate source unknown; Cambuscan comes ultimately from Marco Polo's travels; the magic horse, ring, and mirror are frequently found in Eastern tales—e.g., the 'Arabian Nights.'

The 'Franklin's Tale' of Arviragus and Dorigen, taken from a Breton lay (see F. 709) now lost; the ultimate source is certainly Eastern, the oldest known form being found in an Indian collection, 'Twenty-five Tales of a Vetāla.'

The 'Second Nun's' Legend of St. Cecilia, taken partly from the 'Legenda Aurea' of Jacobus a Voragine, and

partly from another Latin life of St. Cecilia, derived from the Greek of Simeon Metaphrastes.

The 'Canon's Yeoman's Tale' of the Canon's alchemy: no known source; possibly taken from life.

The 'Manciple's Tale' of the Tell-tale Bird, taken from Ovid's *Metamorphoses* ii., and the story of the Magpie in the 'Seven Sages.'

The 'Parson's Tale,' or rather sermon on Penitence and the Seven Deadly Sins, for the most part an adaptation or paraphrase of a French treatise by Frère Lorens, '*Somme de Vices et de Vertus*.'

To quote extracts from the 'Canterbury Tales' is in most instances simply to do them an injustice. But an exception may be made in favour of two stanzas giving us a delightfully humorous description of the poet himself as he appeared to 'our Host':

'Whan seyde was al this miracle, every man
As sobre was, that wonder was to se,
Til that our hoste Iapen tho bigan,
And than at erst he loked up-on me,
And seyde thus, "what man artow?" quod he;
"Thou lokest as thou woldest finde an haic,
For ever up-on the ground I see thee stare.
Approche neer, and loke up merily.
Now war yow, sirs, and lat this man have place;
He in the waast is shape as wel as I;
This were a popet in an arm tcnbrace
For any womman, smal and fair of face.
He semeth elvish by his contenaunce,
For unto no wight dooth he daliaunce"' (B. 1881-94).

Until Chaucer's day the struggle for supremacy among the Middle English dialects had not been finally decided. Trevisa, Minot, and the alliterative poets (except Langland) were still writing in the Northern, Southern, and West Midland dialects respectively. Chaucer, doubtless aided by Wyclif, settled the question once for all by making East Midland henceforward the royal dialect, the King's English. Fortunately he came at a time when this result was rendered possible by the decay of Anglo-French, with which English had been for centuries engaged in a struggle far more momentous than that between the rival dialects, a struggle in which English was then winning

Chaucer's
Language.

all along the line. In 1362 pleadings in the courts of law were ordered to be made in English, and in the same year the parliamentary session was first opened with an English speech. Latin, as we know from Trevisa, was being construed into English in schools instead of into Anglo-French. And side by side with the unification of language proceeded the unification of the nation. Chaucer is our first truly national poet after the Conquest, partly for the negative reason that before the latter half of the fourteenth century it would have been impossible for any poet to have the whole nation for his audience.

To Spenser he was 'Dan Chaucer, well of English undefiled.' To Stow he was 'the first illuminer of our English language.' But Verstegan, in his 'Restitution of Decayed Intelligence,' 1605, says: 'Some few ages after [the Norman Conquest] came Geoffrey Chaucer, who, writing his poesies in English, is of some called the first illuminator of the English tongue: of their opinion I am not (though I reverence Chaucer as an excellent poet of his time). He was indeed a great mingler of English with French, unto which language, belike for that he was descended of French, or rather Walloon, race, he carried a great affection.' In the light of modern knowledge this is an ignorant remark; but it was an ignorance that was of the time rather than of the man, and which it was left for Tyrwhitt to dispel some hundred and seventy years later. The plain truth is that Chaucer's vocabulary is simply the poetical vocabulary of the society in which he mingled. That he introduced French words, that were not commonly current in his day, to any considerable extent, is disproved once and for ever by the fact, first established by Marsh, that Langland, the seer, the poet of the people, uses a slightly larger proportion of words of French and Latin origin than Chaucer does.

The influence of Chaucer upon our later literature would require, if treated adequately, a chapter to itself. Hoccleve, James the First of Scotland, Lydgate, Henryson, Dunbar, Lyndesay, Skelton,¹ Hawes, Sir Philip Sidney, Drayton, and Milton, all pay due

¹ Skelton, however, in his 'Book of Phillip Sparrow,' says that Lydgate writes 'after a higher rate.'

homage to his genius, although several of them appear to rank Gower and Lydgate as his equals. One cause of this may have been that Chaucer's prosody was to them, as it certainly was to Dryden, more or less of a puzzle and a mystery. He is probably our last poet who made full use of the syllabic final *e* in his versification; he may even have prolonged its existence as a separate syllable for a decade or two for this very purpose. The immense significance of this change can be duly appreciated by carefully comparing a poem of Chaucer's with any fifteenth or sixteenth century poem that has been unwarrantably attributed to him. Consequently, the reverence of his earlier successors and imitators must have been lavished rather upon any other characteristics of his genius than upon that which, now that his prosody has at last come to be studied side by side with the historical development of the language, constitutes one of his greatest claims upon our admiration, his mastery of the technique of versification. He rapidly became a careful and a finished metrical artist. His verse has all the easy flow and wondrous melody of the highest word-music. When compared with his French and English predecessors in this respect it is well-nigh impossible to exaggerate his merit. But when critics maintain that he leapt at one bound from the doggerel metre of romance poetry to absolutely flawless music, it is evident that their enthusiastic admiration of his wonderful ear for music, for rhythm, and for cadence, which has been rediscovered in the present century, has led them into exaggeration. Even Lowell says, 'I cannot believe that he ever wrote an imperfect line. His ear would never have tolerated the verses of nine syllables, with a strong accent on the first, attributed to him. Such verses seem to me simply impossible in the pentameter iambic as Chaucer wrote it.' This inevitably recalls Lowell's own dictum, that 'they didn't know everythin' down in Judee.' Such halting and unmusical lines *are* undoubtedly to be found in Chaucer's best work, though there they form an insignificant minority. There is slightly over one per cent. of such nine-syllabled lines in the first three thousand lines of the 'Canterbury Tales.'

The question of Chaucer's models we have perhaps already treated with sufficient fulness. Another question ^{Was Chaucer's} refuses to be put aside: was he an essentially ^{Genius} dramatic genius? Dr. A. W. Ward goes so far ^{Dramatic?} as to say: 'Among the wants which fell to the lot of Chaucer as a poet, perhaps the greatest was the want of a poetic form most in harmony with his most characteristic gifts'—i.e., the dramatic form; and in another place: 'Chaucer was a born dramatist.'² Mr. Courthope¹ has thrown in the great weight of his opinion on the same side. On the other hand, Stopford Brooke avers that he 'is not in any sense a dramatic writer.' And Lowell says: 'I think it a great mistake to attribute to him any properly dramatic power, as some have done.' Part of this remarkable discrepancy of opinion is doubtless due to the use of the word 'dramatic' in different connotations. It has become almost a commonplace to apply the word to Chaucer and other poets merely in the senses of 'vivid,' 'graphic,' 'proper to dialogue.' Before any critic claims Chaucer as a dramatic writer, let him define what he means by the word. But to say that he 'was a born *dramatist*,' to our thinking, simply argues lack of critical insight. The truth is that Chaucer is essentially a narrative-poet, a story-teller in verse, and as such our great modern narrative-poet hails him as 'master' in his 'Jason.'

Chaucer's descriptive powers, whether as a lover of nature, which he studied at first hand, or as a lover of human beings, are equally great. His humour is as sly, subtle, and yet all-pervading as his satire is good-humoured. His characters are drawn to the life, and yet are almost greater as types of the men and women of his day than as individual portraits. 'By what varied means,' says Ten Brink, 'does Chaucer round off his individual figures. Sometimes by seriousness, sometimes by waggishness, now by gentle irony, then by reckless satire; and yet he himself still remains the same. Nowhere does the poet renounce his wide human sympathies, his cheerful benevolence, his amiable good-humour.' 'I see,' says Dryden, 'all the pilgrims in the "Canterbury Tales," their humours, their

¹ 'History of English Poetry,' vol. i., chap. vii., *passim*.

features, and the very dress, as distinctly as if I had supped with them at the Tabard in Southwark.' And again: 'He must have been a man of a most wonderful comprehensive nature; because, as it has been truly observed of him, he has taken into the compass of his "Canterbury Tales" the very manners and humours (as we now call them) of the whole English nation in his age. Not a single character has escaped him. . . . There is such a variety of game springing up before me that I am distracted in my choice, and know not which to follow. 'Tis sufficient to say, according to the proverb, that here is God's plenty.'

'A perpetual fountain of good sense,' Dryden calls him. 'Yes,' adds Lowell, 'and of good-humour too, and wholesome thought. . . . In turning frankly and gaily to the actual world, and drinking inspiration from sources open to all; in turning away from a colourless abstraction [allegory] to the solid earth and to emotions common to every pulse; in discovering that to make the best of nature, and not to grope vaguely after something better than nature, was the true office of Art; in insisting on a definite purpose, on veracity, cheerfulness, and simplicity, Chaucer shows himself the true father and founder of what is characteristically *English* literature.' 'When the truth of this principle in art [of the direct imitation of nature] was realised, it was rapidly developed in other European countries, by Ariosto, by Cervantes, by Molière; but to Chaucer must be assigned the honour of having led the way.'¹

If in all that we mean by diction, rhythm, cadence, Chaucer is unsurpassed in English poetry, on the side of matter as opposed to form he has limitations which make him less great. On this ground Matthew Arnold rules him out of the great classics of universal literature. 'To our praise,' he says, 'of Chaucer as a poet there must be this limitation: he lacks the high seriousness of the great classics, and therewith an important part of their virtue. Still, the main fact for us to bear in mind about Chaucer is his sterling value according to that real estimate which we firmly adopt for all poets. He has poetic truth of

¹ Courthope, i. 801.

substance, though he has not high poetic seriousness, and corresponding to his poetic truth of substance he has an exquisite virtue of style and manner. With him is born our real poetry.'

CHAUCER'S 'TRUTH.'

'Flee fro the prees, and dwelle with sothfastnesse,
Suffice thee thy good, tho hit be smal ;
For hord hath hate, and climbing tickelnesse,
Prees hath envye, and welo blent overal ;
Savour no more than thee bihove shal ;
Werk wel thy-self, that other folk canst rede ;
And trouthe thee shal deliver, hit is no drede.

Tempest thee noght al croked to redresse,
In trust of hir that turneth as a bal :
Gret reste stant in litel besinesse ;
And eek bewar to sporne ageyn an al ;
Stryve noght, as doth the crokke with the wal.
Daunte thy-self, that dauntest otheres dede ;
And trouthe thee shal deliver, hit is no drede.

That thee is sent, receyve in buxumnesse,
The wrastling for this worlde axeth a fal.
Her nis non hoom, her nis but wildernesse :
Forth, pilgrim, forth ! Forth, beste, out of thy stal !
Know thy contrec, look up, thank God of al ;
Hold the hye way, and lat thy gost thee lede :
And trouthe thee shal deliver, hit is no drede.'

CHAPTER IV.

POETS CONTEMPORARY WITH CHAUCER.

THIS chapter, dealing with writers in verse contemporary with Chaucer, will bring the story of our poetic literature up to about the date of his death, the year 1400. It is not easy to say whether Laurence Minot should be accounted a predecessor or a contemporary, for we know nothing of him except his name, which he twice tells us himself. The events celebrated in his eleven short martial poems range from the battle of Halidon Hill in 1333 to the capture of Guisnes in 1352, so that we cannot be far wrong in letting him open this chapter. As will be seen from the sample given below, there is nothing remarkable about Minot's doggerel verse except his subjects. He scrambles along in short riming lines, with alliteration thrown in at random, conveying at times something more than a suggestion of Skelton. But his subjects are really noteworthy: the taking of Berwick, the king's expedition to Brabant, the invasion of France, the sea-fight of Sluys, the siege of Tournai, the landing of Edward at La Hogue, the siege of Calais, the battle of Neville's Cross—these are the themes celebrated by his pen. He is our first 'Jingo' poet; in a somewhat restricted sense of the word, he is our first patriotic poet. He writes to all intents in the metre and diction satirised in 'Sir Thopas'; but his heroes are Edward III. and the Black Prince. This fact alone is sufficient to redeem Minot from oblivion. If the Hundred Years' War was a royal rather than a national war, yet it was impossible but that Crécy and Poitiers should tend to break down the barriers of race and class and kindle some glow of patriotic feeling throughout the nation.

This feeling, first reflected in English verse by Minot, is well seen in the following lines :—

‘Merlin said thus with his mouth,
 Out of the north into the south
 Suld cum a bare [boar = Edward III.] over the se,
 That suld mak many man to fle ;
 And in the se, he said ful right,
 Suld he schew ful mekill might ;
 And in France he suld bigin,
 To mak tham wrath that er tharein,
 Untill the se his taile recche sale [shall reach],
 All folk o Franco to mekill bale,
 Thus have I mater forto make,
 For a noble prince sake ;
 Help me God, my wit es thin ;
 Now Laurence Minot will bigin.’

After Chaucer no figure, not even Wyclif's, bulks so largely in fourteenth-century literature as Langland's. In purely poetical merit he may be outrivalled by the author of 'Gawayne and the Green Knight'; in the personal interest that they excite they are not to be compared. We admire the one as a great artist; Langland we feel to desire to know, and almost to love. If he could have designed himself as an antithesis to Chaucer, he could not have been as successful a contrast as he is without design. Chaucer, the courtier-poet, the refined versifier; Langland, the rugged baird and seer; the author of 'Gawayne,' whose very name we do not know, and who probably lived remote from the court and the busy haunts of men;—these three verily make a trio of which no century needeth to be ashamed. No succeeding century can show three poets more clearly marked off from one another by individual characteristics and more excellent in their several walks of poetry.

‘The narrowness, the misery, the monotony of the life he
 Langland. paints, reflect themselves in his verse. It is only
 here and there that a love of nature, or a grim earnestness of wrath, quicken his rime into poetry; there is not a gleam of the bright human sympathy of Chaucer, of his fresh delight in the gaiety, the tenderness, the daring of the world about him, of his picturesque sense of even its coarsest contrasts, of his delicate irony, of his courtly wit. The cumbrous allegory, the tedious platitudes, the rimed

texts from Scripture, which form the staple of Langland's work, are only broken here and there by phrases of a shrewd common-sense, by bitter outbursts, by pictures of a broad Hogarthian humour.¹ This quotation does, if anything, rather less than justice to the great uncouth poet of the people, whose work is so essential to the social historian of the period, and is well worth reading, *not* in a modern prosaic rendering, but in the popular alliterative measure which commended it to the humble readers and hearers for whom it was originally designed. Yet perhaps there is no work in the whole range of English literature, of equal intrinsic greatness and importance, literary and linguistic, that is so little read and studied for its own sake as 'Piers the Plowman.' The antique vocabulary, the 'barbarous alliterations,' the grim seriousness and earnestness of the writing, the rival claims of 'the father of English poetry,' keep all but the determined or omnivorous reader away. So crass is the ignorance of 'the man in the street' (should we not rather say 'in the drawing room'?) that 'Piers Plowman' has been taken over and over again to be the name of the author.

The name of the author! We know so little of his personal history that his very name has been the subject of contention. That his Christian name was William, and not Robert (as Bale calls him), is placed beyond doubt by his frequent references to himself as 'Wille.' His surname was either Langland or Langley. In support of the latter name there is nothing but the note in the Dublin MS., which itself, however, gives the name as Langland and runs as follows: 'Memorandum, quod Stacy de Rokayle, pater Willielmi de Langlond, qui Stacius fuit generosus, et morabatur in Schiptone-under-Whicwode [Shipton-under-Wychwood, about four miles from Burford, in Oxfordshire], tenens domini le Spenser in comitatu Oxon., qui predictus Willielmus fecit librum qui vocatur Perys Ploughman.' Professor Pearson's² argument (based upon this note) is, that the name Langland in the fourteenth century is associated with a Somersetshire family, and no

¹ 'A Short History of the English People,' by J. R. Green (p. 256)

² 'North British Review,' April 1870.

trace of it can be found in connection with Oxfordshire or Shropshire (Bale states that Langland was born at Cleobury Mortimer in Shropshire); whereas not only is Langley the name of a hamlet in the parish of Shipton, from which the surname may have been derived, but the Langley family are stated to have been wardens of Wychwood Forest from 1278 to 1372. On the other hand, the evidence in favour of the traditional form of the name is too considerable to allow us to abandon it. Tradition itself is no mean evidence. It rests in this case on a note in a manuscript of the fifteenth century ('Robert or william langland made pers ploughman'), and on a statement in John Bale's 'Scriptorum Britanniae Catalogus' of the sixteenth century. But confirmation, as strong as it is strange to us, though highly characteristic of the time, comes from a curious anagrammatic line (B. xv. 148):

'I have lived in *lond*, quod I; my name is *long Will*.'

It will be seen at a glance that the italicised words read backwards give Will Longlond (or Langland), and it is difficult to resist the conclusion that the poet has handed down his name to posterity in this thin disguise.

Beyond this, the little that we know of the author is Autobiographical derived from his work. Thus the dates of the

Facts. first draft, which he doubtless intended at the time to be final, and of the later and longer recensions (conveniently labelled as the A, B, and C texts respectively), are first inferred from his allusions to well-known events, and on the basis of these dates we conclude, from a personal allusion, that he was born about 1332.¹ Again,

'A much[e] [tall] man, me thouthte · lyke to my-selve
Cam and callede me · by my kynde name' (C. xi. 68-9)

is hardly-needed confirmation that '*long Will*' was tall. In this way we might go on gleaning autobiographical facts from his pages, such as that he lived in Cornhill with his wife Kit (they had a daughter '*Calote*' or Nicolette):—

'Thus ich a-waked, god wot · whanne ich wonede on Cornhulle,
Kytte and ich in a cote · clothed as a lollere,
And lytel y-lete by [esteemed] · leyve me for sothe,
Among lollaras of London · and lewede heremytes' (C. vi. 1—4);

¹ The B text, as we shall see, is dated 1377, and in it occurs this line:

'I have followed thee in faith this five-and-forty winter.'

and from the next hundred lines or so of this remarkable passage (C. vi. 1-108) it may be inferred that Langland's father was a franklin, that he was born in lawful wedlock—

'For shold no clerk be crowned · bote yf he ycome were
Of franklens and free men · and of folke yweddede' (*ib.*, 63-4) —

that he took minor orders and perhaps thus gained his intimate knowledge of the religious fraternities; that he lived not only 'in London' but 'on London':—

'And ich lyve in Londone · and on Londone bothe,
The lomes [tools] that ich laboure with · and lyfode deserve
Ys *pater-noster* and my prymer · *placebo* and *dirige*,
And my sauter som tyme · and my severe psalmes.
Thus ich synge for hure soules · of suche as me helpen,
And though that fynden me my fode · vouchen saf, ich trowe,
To be welcome whanne ich come · other-whyle [occasionally] in a
monthe.

Now with hym and now with hure · and thus-gate ich begge
With-oute bagge other botel · bote my wombe one [stomach only]'
(44—52).

From other passages it may fairly be gathered that Langland eked out his precarious livelihood by copying legal documents; and from yet another that his independent spirit would not allow him to pay servile homage to the rich as, gaunt and gloomy but observant, he stalked his way along London streets:—

'And somme lakked [blamed] my lyf · allowed [praised] it fewe.
And leten me for a lorel [considered me a ne'er-do-well] · and loth
to reverencen
Lordes or ladyes · or any lyf elles,
As persones in pellure [fur] · with pendauntes of sylver;
To serjauntz ne to suche · seyde nought ones,
"God loke [save] yow, lordes!" · ne louted faire' (B. xv. 4—9).

Two mentions of localities remain to be chronicled. The poem (in each recension) opens on Malvern Hills, which are referred to in two other passages. If Langland was born at Cleobury Mortimer, the Malvern Hills were not very far distant, and we may assume that he attended the convent school there. Professor Skeat argues with great probability that we possess one other poem of his in 'Richard the Redeless,' which is dated September 1399, when the author was about sixty-seven years of age. If so

Langland may well have ended his life, as he began it, in the West country, for in the opening lines he speaks of himself at Bristol:

'And as I passid in my preiere · ther prestis were at messe,
In a blesid borugh · that Bristow is named.'

We must leave the student to carry on for himself his fascinating pursuit, while we turn to a ^{Piers the Plow-}man.^{man.} The comparison of the three texts of 'Piers ^{Three Texts.} the Plowman.' The A text contains about 2,500 lines, the B text about three times this number, and the C text is rather longer again. In all three recensions there may be said to be at least two distinct poems under the one title of the 'Vision of Piers Plowman,' viz., the Vision of Piers Plowman, and the Vision of Do-wel, Do-bet, and Do-best; and the former may be again subdivided into the Vision of the Field full of Folk and Lady Meed, and the Vision of the Seven Deadly Sins and Piers the Plowman proper. The visions are divided into Prologues and 'Passus' (fits or cantos) in the A and B texts, but the C text sets the convenient example, which we follow for the nonce, of ignoring prologues and numbering all the divisions consecutively as 'passus.' Then the three texts, A, B, and C, have respectively nine, eight, and ten 'passus' of Piers the Plowman, and four, thirteen, and thirteen of Do-wel, Do-bet, and Do-best, or totals of thirteen, twenty-one, and twenty-three 'passus.'

As may be supposed, the A text, though no doubt ^{The A Text.} originally intended to be final, seems nothing more than a rough draft when compared with its later telescopic forms. But it has a compactness and vigour of its own which are by no means diminished when it is so compared. By a curious oversight Wrath is omitted among the Seven Deadly Sins in this text. Its date is fixed at 1362 or thereabouts by several concurrent indications: the lines

'And preuede [proved] that this pestilences · were for pure synne,
And this south-westerne wynt · on a Seterday at even' (v. 13, 14)

evidently refer to recent events—the pestilence of 1361, and the great storm of January 15th, 1362; and there are also

allusions to the Treaty of Bretigny, 1360, and Edward III's wars in Normandy.¹

The B text is, on the whole, perhaps the best of the three. It represents the poet's mature work, without the corrections which seem due to his genius when it had passed from the creative into the critical stage. It is, on the whole, rather more energetic and robust than the latest form, in which the sermonising tendency, which pervades Langland's work, is still more apparent. In the Prologue occurs the famous political apologue of the rats belling the cat (repeated in the C text), and the character of Wrath is inserted in its place. The date is referred to 1377 by the following evidence. There is a reference to the year

'A thousand and thre hondreth 'tweis thretty and ten,'
'when Chichester was mayor.'² Professor Skeat thinks that 'the curious passage about the coming of a time of universal jubilee (B. iii. 299—349) may well have been suggested by the very rare occurrence of the jubilee proclaimed in February 1377, to celebrate the completion of Edward's fiftieth regnal year.' The absence of any reference to the death of Edward is significant. So especially are the words 'if I reign any while' (B. iv. 177), put into the king's mouth. But most conclusive of all is the fable above referred to, in which the cat is Edward III. and the kitten Richard, and which must therefore have been written between June 1376, when the Black Prince died, and June 1377, when Edward III. died, for the Black Prince could not have been called a kitten.

'Though we culled [killed] the catte • yut sholde ther come another,
To cracchy us and al oure kynde • though we crope [crept] under benches.

For-thi I consoille alle the comune • to lat the catte worthe [be],

And be we never so bolde • the belle hym to shewe ;

For I herde my sire seyn • is sevene yere ypassed,

There the catte is a kitoun • the courte is ful elyng [wretched]'

(B. Prologue, 185-90).

A careful comparison of the B and C texts shows that the latter is a revision of the former and not the former of

¹ A. III. 182.

² B. xiii. 270-71.

the latter, that the additions are insertions and the omissions the result of design. The O Prologue contains a new reference to Hophni and Phinehas. This text is by far the most difficult to date, because new allusions in it are few. Professor Skeat says 1393-98, Jusserand favours the latter year. In O. iv. 208-10, Conscience says to the King :

'Unsyttynge [unbecoming] Suffraunce · hure suster and hure-selve
Have maked al-most · bote [except] Marie the helpe,
'That no lond loveth the · and yut leest thyn owene,'

i.e., Meed and her sister Tolerance have made Richard's rule unbearable. M. Jusserand is of opinion that these words must have been aimed at Richard when he had lost his popularity in 1398, not at the time of the local quarrel with the Londoners in 1392, as Skeat suggests, because that quarrel was soon composed and Richard was generally popular throughout the country until 1397.

Artistic unity is hardly to be expected in a work of such a character as this. No doubt Langland wrote because necessity was laid upon him to write. But it seems impossible to believe that he saw a vista of his own poem when he began it. For the first eight 'passus' (following the B text) all goes well enough for the reader to find the main thread again if he sometimes loses it, though it certainly becomes a different thread from the one he started with. But beyond that point there can hardly be said to be a main thread at all. Piers the Plowman himself 'plays many parts.' He does not appear at all until the fifth 'passus,' and is at first only an honest, hard-working, truth-seeking ploughman. Then, with successive changes in the allegory, he seems to stand for the coming ideal reformer, for the Redeemer himself, and finally for the Christian Church. The argument of the 'Vita de Do-wel, Do-bet, Do-best,' in reality a succession of dreams or visions, cannot be condensed with advantage; that of the earlier visions we give briefly here.

*The First Vision.*¹ The poet falls asleep on Malvern Hills, and dreams of a field full of folk, quite as various as the Canterbury pilgrims, but represented by groups and

¹ A and B texts, Prologue and Passus I.—IV. O text, Passus I.—V.

classes rather than by individuals. Holy Church, in the guise of a lovely lady, descends from a castle and expounds the scene to the dreamer. The tower to the east of the plain is the tower of Truth, the dwelling of God the Father; the dungeon beneath is the Castle of Care, where the Father of Falsehood dwells. He asks that he may be enabled 'to know the false,' and is introduced to Falsehood, Favel (Flattery), and Lady Meed (Reward and Bribery). Falsehood and Meed are to be married on the morrow, but Theology intervenes, and the question is referred for settlement to the King at Westminster, whither the parties repair, Meed riding on a sheriff, and Falsehood on a jurymen. The King is forewarned and declares that he will hang Falsehood and Favel if he can catch them; but friendly notice is given, and Meed alone is captured. Guile, the leader of the procession, finds a refuge with tradesmen, whilst Liar is finally housed, washed, clad, and made a member of respectable society by pardoners and friars. The King examines Meed and decides to marry her to Conscience, but that knight refuses the proffered honour, and in an admirable piece of dialectics exposes Meed and her ways in all their ramifications. Here Reason enters, and a new dispute arises between Peace and Wrong. Reason recommends strict justice, and the King requests him to live with him 'as long as our life lasteth.'

*The Second Vision.*¹ The dreamer awakes and dreams again. Reason is preaching to the people, and the Seven Deadly Sins come to confession, some of them in a guise or disguise that is anything rather than abstract. Then they all set out in search of Truth, but nobody knows the way. A palmer they met had never heard of such a saint.

"Peter!" quod a plowman and put forth his hed,
I knowe hym as kyndely as clerke doth his bokes.

(B. v. 544-445.)

This is the first appearance of the Plowman, who forthwith describes the way they must follow, and undertakes to be their guide himself when he has ploughed his half-acre. Meanwhile he sets them all to work, reducing the unwilling by means of Hunger. This part of the poem abounds with

¹ A text, Passus v.—viii.; B text, Passus v.—vii.; C text, Passus vi.—x.

passages which throw the most vivid light on the social life of the time. Then Truth, hearing of the pilgrimage, sends Piers a bull of pardon, the validity of which is disputed by a priest; and the dispute waxes so hot that the dreamer awakes. Reflecting on his dream, he does not impugn the pope's power to grant pardons, but concludes that to trust in such

'Is not so syker for the soul · serres, as Do-wel' (A. viii. 187).

'Thauh thou be fouden in fraternite · a-mong the fourc ordres,
And habbe indulgences i-doubled · bote [except] Dowel the helpe,
I nolde yere for thi pardoun · one pye-hele !' (A. viii. 179-81).

'The energy of individual conviction which animates
Satirist and Seer. Langland's satire gives his poem a unique place in the somewhat lifeless history of English allegory, and inspires his abstract personages with a dramatic and human interest of which there is no other example till we meet with the characters of the "Pilgrim's Progress."¹ Some of the Seven Deadly Sins in Passus v. (B text) are the most realistic and concrete abstractions that ever did duty in allegory. Their portraits are painted with Flemish minuteness of detail, and with Hogarthian lifelikeness. 'Glutton,' when on his way to shrift at church, is lured into a tavern, which he leaves in such a condition,

'That with al the wo of this world · his wyf and his wenche
Beeren him hom to his bed · and brouhten him ther-inne.
And after al this surfet · an accesse he hedde,
That he slepte Seturday and Sonenday · till sonne wente to reste.'
(A. v. 208-11.)

But Langland has a very different manner from this. He is not only a biting satirist, he is a seer. There is the famous passage in apparent prophecy of the Reformation which attracted great attention in the reign of Henry VIII. :

'And thanne shal the abbot of Abyndoun · and alle his issu for evere,
Have a knokke of a kynge · and incurable the wounde'
(B. x. 326-27) ;

and the still finer, if less famous, passage in which he predicts the 'good time coming' in lines, to the weird music of which our unaccustomed ears can hardly yet be insensible :

¹ Courthope. i. 349.

' Shal no Mede be maister • nevere more after,
 Ac¹ love and lounesse² • and leaute³ to-gederes
 Shullen be maistres on molde⁴ • trewe men to helpe . . .
 Ac kynde love shal come yut • and conscience to-gederes,
 And make of lawe a laborer • suche love shal aryse,
 And such pees among the puple • and a parfyt treuthe
 That Iewes shal wene in here witt • and wexo so glade,
 That here kyng be ycome • fro the court of hevenc,
 Moyses other⁵ Messias • that men be so trewe.
 For alle that bereth baselardes⁶ • bryght swerde, other launce,
 Axe, other acchelt • other eny kynne wepne,⁷
 Shal be demed to the deth • bote yf he do hit smythie⁸
 In-to sykkel other into sithe • to shar⁹ other to culter;¹⁰
 Ech man to pleye with a plouh • a pycoyse other a spade,
 Spynnen, and speke of God • and spille no tyme.'

(C. iv 446-66.)

The essential characteristics of Middle English alliterative metre can be observed well enough in the foregoing extracts. As a rule there are three alliterating words (*k* alliterates with *c* and any vowel with any vowel) in a whole line, two in the first half and one in the second, and the alliterative syllables bear the first three of the four metrical accents, the fourth falling on the (rhetorically) most emphatic syllable near the close of each line. There is great latitude in the number of unaccented syllables.

The question of Langland's models need not detain us long. In that day he was bound to be an allegorist, for who was not? He found allegory in the Bible, in the Fathers, and in medieval theology; homiletical literature, English and foreign, consisted of little else than a mystical interpretation of Scripture, closely akin to allegory; he found it in the 'Romaunt of the Rose,' and in Robert Grosseteste's 'Chastel d'Amour' (the bosom of the Virgin), from which he borrowed the debate of Mercy, Truth, Righteousness and Peace in B. xviii. (C. xxi.). Above all, he found allegory in the Miracle Plays combined with the very life and movement from which it is usually divorced, but with which it is seen in the same close connection in his own work.

¹ But.

² Lowliness.

³ Any kind of weapon.

⁴ Unless he have it smithied.

⁵ Loyalty.

⁶ Earth.

⁷ Sharo.

⁸ Coulter.

⁹ Or.

¹⁰ Daggere.

The contrast between Langland and Chaucer is as in-
 Langland and evitable as that between March and May—the
 Chaucer. May of the poets. 'Chaucer describes the rich
 much more fully than the poor, and shows the holiday-
 making, cheerful, genial phase of English life; but Lang-
 land pictures the homely poor in their ill-fed, hard-working
 condition, battling against hunger, famine, injustice, op-
 pression, and all the stern realities and hardships that tried
 them as gold is tried in the fire. Chaucer's satire often
 raises a good-humoured laugh; but Langland's is that of a
 man who is constrained to speak out all the bitter truth,
 and it is as earnest as the cry of an injured man who
 appeals to heaven for redress.'¹ Both men had poetic
 souls; poetry was a necessary outlet for the genius of each:
 but with what a difference! The necessity in the one case
 was moral, political, religious; in the other it was literary,
 artistic. The contrast between the subjects and the versifi-
 cation of their poems is equally marked and equally
 significant. Organic unity of design is as conspicuous in
 the one as it is conspicuously absent in the other. As a
 literary craftsman Chaucer outdid all his predecessors in
 the middle ages, with the single exception of Dante; Lang-
 land, in apparent contempt of literary craftsmanship, helped
 to revive an antiquated metre for the sake of its
 mnemonic qualities, and, by sheer force of native genius,
 made his way high up in the ranks of the craft which he
 either ignored or contemned. Langland is at his best and
 greatest in detachable lines and passages; he is so far from
 maintaining a uniform level that whole tracts of his poem
 are nothing better than wearisome and often involved
 homilies. Chaucer, on the other hand, as a consequence
 of the artistic sense on which we have insisted, is greatest
 in the mass. As Lowell says (who, however, does bare
 justice to Langland), 'it is not in detached passages that
 his charm lies, but in the entirety of expression and the
 cumulative effect of many particulars working toward a
 common end.' Once more, Chaucer had come under the
 influence of foreign culture in a degree that was impossible
 for Langland. English of the English as we are proud to

¹ 'Piers the Plowman,' ed. Skeat (Clarendon Press), II., liv.

think Chaucer was, there is, as Jusserand says, 'something of a cosmopolitan tinge about him'; beside him, Langland is purely insular. 'Chaucer and Langland, the two great poets of the period, represent excellently the English genius, and the two races that have formed the nation. One more nearly resembles the clear-minded, energetic, firm, practical race of the Latinised Celts, with their fondness for straight lines; the other resembles the race which had the deepest and especially the earliest knowledge of tender, passionate, and mystic aspirations, and which lent itself most willingly to the lulls and pangs of hope and despair—the race of the Anglo-Saxons.'¹

Langland does not attract the superficial reader, but he repays study, and those who know him best rate him most highly. A recent writer has made a most interesting comparison between him and Dante,² a fact that in itself does infinite honour to our countryman. As this accomplished critic says, 'No one who has studied his work in itself can doubt that he was a man of profound religious conviction; that, by force of character and intellect, he was qualified to form a right judgment of man and society; that experience had acquainted him with the minutest details of the life which he described; and that—making allowance for the archaic vehicle of expression he adopted—he possessed all the genius, insight, and literary skill necessary to present his poetical conceptions in an artistic form.' There is no sufficient reason why his star should be dimmed by the brighter constellation of Chaucer; they are far enough apart for Langland to shine refulgent within his own more limited sphere.

'Piers Plowman' rapidly became far more famous than its author, and the name passed into a by-word for the honest labouring man. Langland was flattered by imitations in his own life-time, such as 'Pierce the Ploughman's Crede' and the 'Plowman's Tale,' the former by no means devoid of interest or merit. Lydgate's 'London Lickpenny' has several echoes of the earlier work. Gawain Douglas, 'beastly Skelton,' Ridley, Fuller, and Dryden either quote

¹ 'A Literary History of the English People,' by J. J. Jusserand, i. 402

² Courthope, *ut sup.*, i. 226 *seq.*

directly or allude to Langland's poem. The Elizabethan critics, Webbe and Puttenham, mention it. Meres places Langland at the head of his list of English satirists; while Milton quotes him in his quarrel with Hall in disproof of the latter's claim of being the first English satirist. Gascoigne's 'Steel Glas' has a 'plowman' named 'Peerce, with reminiscences of Langland; Spenser bids his 'Shepherd's Calendar'

'Dare not to match thy pipe with Tityrus [Chaucer] his style,
Nor with the Pilgrim that the Ploughman playde awhyle;'

while Drayton paraphrases a large portion of the last 'passus' in his 'Legend of Cromwell' (1607).

If Langland's 'Plowman' obtained for centuries a fame exceeding that of his creator, it was the good 'Moral Gower,' or ill fortune of Gower, as of Lydgate, to occupy for a few generations a niche in the 'House of Fame' alongside of Chaucer and several tiers above that to which they have now had to descend. For example, Sir David Lyndesay declares, in his 'Complaint of the Papingo,' that the poets of his own age dare not aspire to the praise of the three English poets, Chaucer, Gower, and Lydgate. The reason of this apparent freak of criticism we shall have shortly to consider.

The relations that subsisted between Chaucer and Gower have been already dealt with. Of his life it *Life and Works.* is sufficient to say that he was of aristocratic family and aristocratic sympathies. The year of his birth is not known, but he was some years Chaucer's senior, and survived him eight years, dying in 1408. His monument in St. Saviour's, Southwark, where he was buried, represents him with his head supported on his three great works. These were the 'Speculum Meditantis' (mirror of one meditating) in French verse, the 'Vox Clamantis' (voice of one crying) in Latin, and the 'Confessio Amantis' (confession of a lover) in English. In addition to these he wrote 'Cinkante Balades' in French, and 'Cronica Tripartita' in Latin verse, the latter being a kind of historical sequel to the 'Vox Clamantis' and carrying the narrative of events from 1387 to 1399. It had long been supposed that no manuscript of the 'Speculum Meditantis

was extant, but in 1895, in the Cambridge University Library, a long French poem proved on examination to be the missing work of Gower. It competes with the 'Vox Clamantis' for the honour of having suggested to Chaucer the epithet 'moral' for its author. The last-named poem was probably written about 1382-84, for its subject is the rebellion of Wat Tyler in 1381. Gower's aristocratic sympathies were not diminished by the fact that he owned land in Kent, the heart of the rebellion; but in the seven books of his long Latin poem he preaches in turn to the different classes of society—he is especially severe on the clergy, both regular and secular—and tries to lay his finger on the real cause of the social disturbances, which had evidently proved a minor Reign of Terror to the well-to-do. This fact constitutes the chief interest of the poem.

No one now reads Gower, but he lives in literary history 'Confessio Amantis' by (and his fame would suffer no loss if he had written nothing else but) his English poem, the 'Confessio Amantis.' It consists of thirty thousand lines in octosyllabic couplets, divided into a Prologue and eight books. It is extant in two forms, the first, dating about 1385, dedicated to Richard II., the latter dated 'The yere sixtenth of King Richard,' and dedicated

'unto min owne lorde,
Which of Lancaster is Henry named.'

The only other change of importance in the later 'edition' is the omission of the reference to Chaucer already cited (see p. 40). We gather from the original dedication that King Richard had had the good sense to desire Gower to write something in English:

'And that for fewe men endite
In our Englissh, I thanke make
A boke for King Richardes sake,
To whom belongeth my legiaunce
With all min hertes obeisaunce.
In Themse, whan it was flowend,
As I by bote came rowend,
So as fortune her time sette
My lege lord perchaunce I mette,
And so befel as I came nigh
Out of my bote, when he me sigh [saw],

He bad me come into his barge ;
 And whan I was with him at large,
 Amonges other thinges said
 He hath this charge upon me laid,
 And bad me do my besinesse,
 That to his highe worthynesse
 Some newe thing I shulde boke
 That he himself it mighte loke
 After the forme of my writing.'

Ap^{art} from this passage we could have borne the loss of the Prologue with fortitude, for it is only a reiteration in little of the 'voice of one crying,' a *résumé* of the history of the world in the light of Nebuchadnezzar's dream. Of the eight books which make up the remainder of the poem, one, the seventh, is an unwarrantable interpolation of the 'secree of secrees, parde,' the 'Secreta Secretorum,' or the supposed course of instruction given by Aristotle to Alexander. The other seven books have sufficient unity of plan. The Lover, wounded by Cupid, makes his moan to Venus, who bids him be shriven by Genius her priest. Henceforward Genius takes the lion's share in the proceedings, dividing the *agenda* under the heads of the Seven Deadly Sins—Pride, Envy, Anger, Sloth, Avarice, Gluttony, Lechery—with their subdivisions, and then helping the Lover out with questions, after the manner of the Roman confessional. Every sin or phase of sin has to be connected more or less—often less—successfully with love, and the priest first illustrates each with a tale, and then asks the Lover whether he has sinned in that particular way. By such dialogue one hundred and twenty tales are strung together.

Gower has some of the qualities that go to the making of a great *raconteur*: a certain rapidity of movement, which is perhaps not unaided by the 'choppiness' of his metre, and an occasional felicity of description. The 'historic estimate' of his literary qualities differs greatly from the intrinsic estimate. In comparison with his predecessors in the epical school we can praise him as highly, as we find it hard to tolerate him in comparison with Chaucer. From Robert of Bourne's 'Handling Sin,' in which stories are still chiefly told as moral illustrations,

Gower seems to have passed on to the position of the modern religious tract-writer, who lays himself out for the telling of a good story in the hope that the reader's avidity will carry him on to the bitter end. In fact, Gower is the strangest mixture of the 'moral' and the immoral; the perennial conflict between the powers of good and evil, between the spirit and the flesh, is startlingly illustrated by the grossly immoral tales in the '*Confessio Amantis*' told with an ostensibly moral purpose—

'Which may be wisdom to the wise,
And play to hem that list to play.'

'This strange medley of things human and divine,' says Mr. T. Arnold, 'of which notable examples exist in the works of Chaucer and Boccaccio, does not mean the consecration of the world of passion by introducing religion into it, but the profanation of religion by degrading its rites and emblems to the service of earthly desire. But in this commingling of the morality of Christianity and the morality of Ovid, the two elements agree no better than fire and water.' And even the late Henry Morley, whose criticism resolved itself into universal apology, admitted that 'there is no poet of his time who makes us feel so often as Gower does in the "*Confessio Amantis*" the touch, as it were, of naked flesh; who so often leads us to remember that he wrote when night-clothes were not worn.'

From the purely literary standpoint Gower achieved two noteworthy things: he made the first collection of tales in English verse which was in reality, and in spite of its title, more a collection of tales than anything else. And he was the first Englishman to make a framework for his tales giving unity of design to the whole, though, unlike Chaucer, in this he shows no advance on Boccaccio, but rather a relapse into medievalism. His best tales are those of Apollonius of Tyre and the Knight Florent. The former was partly used for the plot of '*Pericles*'—first included among Shakespeare's plays in the Third Folio of 1664—in which Gower himself plays the part of Ochorus; the latter is the Wife of Bath's Tale in Chaucer. Other tales are common to Gower and Chaucer, such as Appius and Virginia or the Physician's Tale, the story of Constance or

the Man of Law's Tale; but in no case did Chaucer take his material from Gower; for the story of Constance the common source was the Anglo-Norman Chronicle of Nicholas Trivet. The following extract from this story gives a not unfair idea of Gower's manner:

'But he, which alle thing may shilde,
Thre year til that she cam to londe,
Her ship to stere hath take on honde,
And in Northumberlond arriveth,
And happeth thanne that she driveth
Under a castell with the flood,
Whiche upon Humber banke stood:
And was the kinges owne also,
The whiche Allee was cleped tho,
A Saxon and a worthy knight,
But he beleveth nought aright.
Of this castell was castellaine
Elda, the kinges chamberlaine,
A knightly man after his lawe.
And when he sigh upon the wave,
The ship drivend alone so,
He badde anon men shulden go
To se what it betoken may.
This was upon a somer day,
The ship was lokid, and she founde.
Elda within a litel stounde
It wist, and with his wife anon
Toward this yonge lady gon,
Where that they founde gret richesse.
But she her wolde nought confesse,
Whan they her axen what she was.
And netheles, upon the cas,
Out of the ship with great worship
They toke her into felaschip,
As they that weren of her glade;
But she no maner joie made,
But sorweth sore of that she fonde
No Christendome in thilke londe.
But elles she hath all her will,
And thus with hem she dwelleth stille.'

In our descent from Chaucer we now go North to
Barbour. Aberdeen, then return and climb a lofty peak
in the North-West Midlands, before dropping
suddenly to the level of prose. It is not quite clear to us
why, in some recent histories of English literature, John
Barbour is altogether ignored. It is hardly fair to him

to pigeon-hole his 'Bruce' as a historical romance, and deal with it by implication in a section on that class of works. It is the best representative of the Scotch poetry of the fourteenth century, and far transcends in poetic merit such works as Andrew of Wyntoun's 'Original Chronicle of Scotland' and Blind Harry's 'William Wallace,' which stand for the same class in the following century. Moreover, it is the work most typical of the national spirit in early Scottish poetry, the best expression of the intense feeling engendered by their forty years' struggle for national freedom. This feeling finds its best expression in a famous passage of the 'Bruce':

'A! fredome is a noble thing!
 Fredome mays (makes) man to haiff liking;
 Fredome all solace to man gillis:
 He levis at ese that frely levis!
 A noble hart (heart) may haiff nane ese,
 Na ellys nocht that may him plese,
 Gyff fredome failyhe; for fre liking
 Is yharnt (yearned for) our (over) all othir thing.
 Na he, that ay has levt fre,
 May nocht knaw weill the propyrie,
 The angyr, na the wrechyt dome,
 That is couplyt to foule thyrdome (thralldom).
 Bot gyff he had assayit it,
 Than all perquer (by heart) he suld it wyt;
 And suld think fredome mar to prys
 Than all the gold in world that is.
 Thus contrar thingis evir-mar
 Discoveryngis off the tothir ar.
 And he that thryll (thrall) is has nocht his,
 All that he has enbandounyt is
 Till his lord, quhat evir he be.
 Yheyt (yet) has he nocht sa mekill fre
 As fre [liking] to leyve or do
 That at his hart hym drawis to' (Book ii. 225-48).

Barbour goes on to confute those foolish persons who have compared wedlock and thralldom:—

'For men may weile se, that ar wys,
 That wedding is the hardest band
 That ony man may tak on hand;'

but thralldom is worse than death itself.

These passages give occasion to call attention to the characteristics of the Northern dialect of 'inglis,' as

Barbour calls it—the dialect spoken in the Lowlands of Northern Scotland, more often and more incorrectly Middle English, called ‘Lowland Scotch’—at the close of the third quarter of the fourteenth century, and therefore before the composition of any of Chaucer’s greatest poems. A careful examination of the foregoing lines will bring out the almost total absence of the syllabic final *e*—the French word *propyrite*, with the *e* in the rime, seems the only exception—that is so conspicuous in Chaucer’s versification. We shall return to this subject in connection with fifteenth-century poetry; meanwhile the fact is to be noted for the sake of comparison with the same octosyllabic-couplet metre in the contemporary poetry of Chaucer and Gower—for example, in the ‘House of Fame’ 1384, and the ‘Confessio Amantis’ about 1385, in both of which the syllabic *e* is of frequent occurrence.

The details of Barbour’s¹ life are as meagre as any one Barbour’s Life could wish. The date of his birth lies between and Works. 1316 and 1330. The Latin rubric at the head of Book i. of the ‘Bruce’ describes him as “archidiaconum Abyrdonensem,” and this position he held from the first mention of his name in 1357 to the day of his death. He received safe-conducts from Edward III. for the purposes of foreign study in 1357 and 1364, when he went to Oxford, and in 1365 and 1368, when he proceeded to France. He was frequently employed as auditor both of the king’s household and of the exchequer, but not in 1374-75, doubtless because he was too busy with the ‘Bruce.’ In 1376 or 1377 he received ten pounds by the king’s order, and on August 29, 1378, a grant of twenty shillings yearly was made to himself and his heirs and assigns for ever. We may safely assume that one of these two grants was in token of the completion of his great work. He died March 13, 1395.

We know from Andrew of Wyntoun’s ‘Chronicle,’ not only that Barbour was the author of the ‘Bruce,’ but that he also wrote two lost poems, the ‘Brut’ (chronicle), and ‘The Stewarts’ Original,’ a genealogy of the Stuarts

¹ The name is also spelt Barber, Barbar, Barbero, Barbare, Barbier and Barbour; its meaning is obvious.

beginning with Ninus, founder of Nineveh.¹ Besides these, some 'Lives of Saints' and a fragment of a 'Siege of Troy' have been assigned to Barbour, but the attribution has been disproved on internal evidence.

Barbour's one extant poem, the 'Bruce,' extends to more than thirteen thousand lines, divided into twenty books.² It carries its subject in its title: the life and adventures 'of the most excellent and noble prince, Robert de Broyss, King of Scots,' and his companions, from 1286 to 1332 A.D. This is also the argument in brief; to give it in greater fulness would be merely to detail the author's departures from historical accuracy. It includes, of course, the Battle of Bannockburn. The date of composition can be fixed within sufficiently narrow limits. It was begun after February 22, 1371, the date of accession of Robert II. of Scotland, in whose reign Barbour says that he wrote his poem. Nearly two-thirds were completed in 1375, for in Book xiii. the author writes:

'And in tyme of the compyling
Of this buk, this robert wes kyng,
And of his kynrik passit was
v yeir; and wes the yer of grace
Ane thousand thre hundreth and sevinty
And, v and of his elde sixty.
And that wes eftir that the gud king
Robert wes brocht till his ending,
Sex and fourty vyntir, but (without) mar

(Book xiii., 699—707).

It was finished not later than August 1378, the date of the above mentioned annuity.

Barbour opens his poem with a statement of his intentions, which is nothing if not ingenuous:

'Storys to rede ar delitabill,
Suppose that thai be nocht bot fabill;
Than suld storys that sutfast wer,
And (if) thai war said on gud maner,
Have doubill plesance in heryng.
The fyrst plesance is the carpyng (narration),
And the tothir the sutfastnes,

¹ A curiously significant piece of incidental evidence that the poet had to live by the Court in those days.

² This division was first made in Pinkerton's edition of 1790

That schawys the thing rycht as it wes ;
 And suth thyngis that are likand (pleasing)
 Tyll (to) mannys heryng, ar plesand.
 Tharfor I wald fayne set my will,
 Gif my wyt mycht suffice thartill,
 To put in wryt a suthfast story,
 That it lest (may last) ay furth in memory,
 Swa that na [lenth of tyme] it let (hinder),
 Na ger it haly (wholly) be forget' (l. 1-16).

He sets out therefore to tell a true story, and, if we can only make sufficient allowance for his patriotic bias, he succeeds. The death of Edward I. of England at Burgh-in-the-Sand is told in Book iv., whereas its proper place is at the beginning of Book ix.—but that is a mere trifle. 'Barbour's feeling for his country,' says Jussorand, 'is nothing short of passionate love; so much so that, when a legend is to the credit of Scotland, his critical sense entirely disappears, and miracles become for him history. Thus with monotonous uniformity throughout his poem a handful of Scotchmen rout the English multitudes; the highlanders perform prodigies, and the king still surpasses them in valour; everything succeeds with him as in a fairy tale.' On the other hand, Mr. J. Bain, the editor of the 'Calendar of Documents relating to Scotland,' says: 'Barbour abounds in graphic pictures of his hero's career, and of those who served with or against the King of Scots. In these details he is almost always correct, with occasional errors in names. Writing as he did at a long interval of time, about half a century after King Robert's death, the arrangement of his story is often imperfect, the succession of events transposed, and wrong dates given, capable, however, of being corrected by other authority, and detracting little from the real historical value of the "Bruce." These two opposing criticisms are not in reality contradictory. If, on the one hand, the English only win two victories in the course of the whole twenty books, whatever the odds in their favour may be, on the other, there is plenty of truth of local and historic colour, setting, detail, and anecdote, that leaves us, English though we be, on very good terms with John Barbour.

It is worthy of remark that Sir Walter Scott more than

once or twice takes material from the 'Bruce' for his poems and romances. The advertisement to the first edition of his 'Lord of the Isles' mentions Barbour as one of the chief authorities. The title of his novel, 'Castle Dangerous,' is taken from a line in the 'Bruce'—

'The aventurus castell off Douglas' (viii. 495) ;

and the Introduction states that 'the incidents on which the ensuing novel mainly turns are derived from the ancient metrical chronicle of the Bruce by Archdeacon Barbour, and from, etc.,' and quotes two long passages from the same. Lastly, 'he has borrowed several incidents from it to embellish his "Tales of a Grandfather."'

It has been well said that in the period with which we West Midland are now dealing we are no longer distracted Poetry. by a multitude of minor names, none of them of first-rate importance, but are compelled to concentrate our attention on a few great figures towering high above the rest. The last of these belonging to this chapter is the nameless West Midland poet of 'Sir Gawayn and the Green Knight.' There was, about the middle of the fourteenth century, a notable revival of alliterative poetry in the West Midlands, especially along the Welsh Marches and in the North-West. Doubtless a wave of this revival reached Langland in his Shropshire home and helped to determine the form of his verse. The whole movement is somewhat misty and undefined; we know of its existence from the unmistakable evidence of its extant literary remains; its dates, localities, and details we can only give in general statements. In date, it centres in the third quarter of the century. Its most marked characteristic is its return to the long alliterative line of Old English poetry. This must be regarded as a triumphant outburst of the Anglo-Saxon spirit at the victories which we have seen it winning, as against the Norman, within the nation itself—an outburst that manifested itself in localities where the welding of the two elements was least complete. With the Old English metrical line came back other features of its poetry, especially prominent among which was a

vocabulary teeming with musical old words, synonyms, and epic formulae, many of which can hardly have been understood by Chaucer's readers, and are now unhappily lost for ever from our tongue. But in some poems these old native elements are found in somewhat strange combination with rime; and in keeping with this combination of alien elements of metrical form is the blending of Saxon and Romance diction and of native and foreign subject-matter. The march of the enemy, Time, is too strong for the best-intentioned and most patriotic of conservative movements. 'The ideal world into which we are transported by this noble alliterative poetry is by no means an Old Teutonic or Old English one. Manners and sentiments, costume and mounting, essentially belong to cultivated, medieval society, powerfully influenced by France.'¹

All the distinctive features of this poetry are seen in the works of the one writer of it we are able to individualise to some extent, though we cannot name him, and whom we must therefore call—what he was *kar' êfoχyn*—the West Midland poet, the author of 'Gawayn and the Green Knight,' 'The Pearl,' 'Cleanness,' and 'Patience.' These four poems are extant in one fourteenth-century manuscript, all in the same handwriting, and there is no reasonable doubt that they are all the work of one and the same poet. We know not one solitary fact about him from external evidence. As far as internal evidence is a safe guide, no one knows how to interpret it better than Ten Brink, who says of our author: 'It is hard to determine his rank in life. After being educated at the cloister-schools, he probably entered the house of some nobleman, where he was occupied as a scribe, or reader, or perhaps as director of the minstrels. Although versed in Latin and French, and tolerably well read both in the Bible and profane literature, he was also at home in the mysteries of the hunt and in other knightly exercises. He knew well how a knight was armed, and what occurred in courtly circles at festivals, at the reception of strangers, etc., for he had often seen them. He evidently took pleasure in this merry, brilliant life. But he was especially attracted

¹ Ten Brink's 'Early English Literature, p. 831.

by nature. His musing disposition found charm in watching her in the different phases of the year, and he seems acquainted by personal observation with a great part of western England, traversed perhaps in company with his lord, or at his behest.' His dialect shows that he lived in the North-West of England—in Lancashire or the Lake district as likely as anywhere. He must have flourished about 1360-75.

Of the four poems above named, 'Gawayn' alone is secular; 'The Pearl' is a religious allegory; 'Cleanness' and 'Patience' are biblical, inculcating by means of Scripture narratives the virtues from which they take their titles. It is by the first two that we elect to judge the poetic art of the author. But first a word as to his metres. The two last-named poems are in the long alliterative line, without end-rime, 'Sir Gawayn' is a poem of two thousand five hundred odd lines, divided into four fitts, which are again divided into stanzas, each of which consists of a varying number¹ of long unrimed alliterative lines and is closed by five short rimed lines, the first with one accent and the last four with three, with the invariable rime-formula *ababa*. The metre of the 'Pearl' is even more complex. It is divided into a hundred and one stanzas of twelve rimed, alliterative lines with four accents, with the unvarying rime-formula *abababbcbcb*. The stanzas group themselves into twenty sections, each consisting of five stanzas (in one case six) connected by a common refrain in the last line. Moreover, the refrain is always partly caught up in the first line of the following stanza, so that in four stanzas out of every five the last line is a partial echo of the first. Similarly the last line of the poem is an echo of the first. It is marvellous how little the poet is hampered by this complicated ingenuity of versification, which will be made clearer by the quotation of a stanza:

"Now blyse, burne, mot the bytyde,"
Then sayde that lufsum of lyth and lere;
"And welcum here to walk and byde,
For now thy speche is to me dere;
Maysterful mod and hyghe pryde

¹ In consecutive stanzas this number varies as follows: 22 lines, 27, 20; and again 14, 26, 14, 28, 19, 27.

I hete the arn heterly hated here ;
 My lorde ne lovez for to chyde,
 For meke arn alle that woncz hym nere ;
 And when in hys place thou schal apere,
 Be dep devote in hol mekenesse ;
 My lorde the lamb lovez ay such cheic,
 That is the grounde of alle my blysse."¹

The argument of 'The Pearl' is simple. The poet has lost his pearl, his little daughter, and is mourning over her grave. There he falls asleep, and sees in a vision his lost pearl, his only child, in a glorious land, from which a stream separates him. She speaks to him, and he asks if she is indeed his pearl, though he has no doubts about the matter. He had lost only a rose; now he has found a pearl of great price. She tells him the parable of the labourers in the vineyard; she is one of those who have toiled but one hour. Then she directs him to a hill, whence he can see the new Jerusalem and his pearl among the ranks of the ransomed virgins; he tries in vain to cross the stream, and in the effort awakes. 'A praiseworthy enthusiasm for ancient relics of the language has perhaps exaggerated the poetical merits of "The Pearl,"' says Courthope. 'It is of course possible that "The Pearl" may embody the feelings of one who had suffered an actual bereavement; but, if so, the poet either wished to leave no trace of himself in his allegory, or, what is more probable, did not know how to reach the heart by those exquisite personal touches that lend such pathos to the parallel situation in Dante's "Vita Nuova." Nor does the allegory itself appear to be very happily conceived; no great powers of invention are required to feign that one has lost a pearl, and afterwards to indicate that what has been really lost is a daughter or a sister. Like all the compositions of the school of Cynewulf the poem shows a passion for riddles and conceits. Its chief merits are a very charming style of ideal landscape-painting and a facility of versification, but in the latter respect the writer seems to

¹ "Now may bliss betide thee, sir," then said that maid fair of form and face; "and welcome here to walk and abide, for now thy speech is dear to me; masterful mood and high pride I tell thee are bitterly hated here; my Lord loves not to chide, for meek are all that dwell near Him; and when in His place thou shalt appear, be deep and devout in all meekness; my Lord the Lamb aye loves such cheer, Who is the ground of all my bliss."

have had no suspicion of the latent harmonies afterwards evoked from the language by Chaucer.'

But in 'Gawayn and the Green Knight' (the suggestion for which was taken from the 'Perceval' of 'Gawayn and the Green Knight,' Chrestien de Troyes) we have to do with a masterpiece, and that at a time when romances had for the most part degenerated into the lifeless rigmarole burlesqued in 'Sir Thopas.' A Green Knight came to Arthur's court at Christmastide, bearing a sharp axe, and challenged any knight to give him a blow with the axe on the agreement that he should seek the Green Knight and receive a return blow from him in a year and a day. Sir Gawayn begged the adventure, and cut off the giant's head; whereupon the latter picked up his head, which bade Gawayn seek him at the Green Chapel, and galloped away, head in hand. On the first of November Gawayn set out, and after many adventures reached a castle on Christmas Day, where he was warmly welcomed. The lord of the castle, in whom Gawayn did not recognise his adversary, made a bargain with him, that while he was out hunting the next three days, his guest should remain at home and rest in the care of the lady of the castle, and that at the close of each day they should exchange the spoils that they had won. Then a sore temptation befel Sir Gawayn, for the lady entered his sleeping-room each morning in loose attire, directly her lord had started to the hunt, and kissed him once, twice, thrice, on three successive days. This is the conclusion of the first day's tempting:

'Thenne ho gef him god-day, & wyth a glent lazed,
& as ho stod, ho stonyed hym wyth ful stor wordes :
" Now he that speides uche spech, this disport yelde yow !
Bot that ye be Gawan, hit gots in mynde."
" Quer-fore ? " quoth the freke, & freschly he askes,
Ferde lest he hade fayled in fourme of his castes ;
Bot the burde hym blessed, & bi this skyl sayde :
" So god as Gawayn gaynly is halden,
& cortaysye is closed so clene in hym-selven,
Couth not lyztly haf lenged so long wyth a lady,
Bot he had craved a cosse, bi his courtaysye,
Bi sum towch of summe tryfle, at sum tales ende."
Then quoth Wowen, " I-wysse, worthe as yow lykys,
I schal kysse at your comaundement, as a knyzt falles,

& fere lest he displese yow, so plede hit no more."
 Ho comes nerre with that, & caches hym in armes,
 Loutes luflych adoun, & the leude kysses :
 Thay comly bykennen to kryst ayther other ;
 Ho dos hir forth at the dore, with-outen dyn more.
 & he ryches hym to ryse, & rapes hym sone,
 Clepes to his chamberlayn, choses his wede,
 Bojes forth, quen he wats boun, blythely to masse,
 & thenne he meded to his mete, that menskly hym kepced,
 & made myry al day til the mone rysed,
 with game ;

Wats never freke fayrer fonge
 Bitwene two so dyngne dame,
 The alder & the yonge ;
 Much solace set thay same.'¹ (III. vii.)

Gawayn was sorely tried, but he honourably paid the kisses to his host each evening, and that was all that he received—except that on the third day he accepted a charmed green girdle which would protect him from all dangers, and agreed to conceal this gift. Wherefore, when, on New Year's Day, he found the Green Knight at the Green Chapcl, he received a slight blow on the neck in punishment of this small scathe to his honour, of which he said the green girdle would evermore suffice to remind him :

' & thus quen pryde schal me pryke, for prowes of armes,
 The loke to this luflice schal lethe (abate) my hert.'

Here, as elsewhere, this poet's two great ideas are 'clean-ness' and 'patience,' but they are not insisted on in the 'We learn from this, dear brethren' style, but left to be inferred from the action of the poem. For this West Midland poet is an artist and a conscious artist ; he does not wander

¹ "Then she gave him good day and with a glance laughed, and as she stood she astonished him with very bold words ; "Now he that speeds each speech yield you this disport ! But that ye be Gawayn, doubt runs in my mind." "Wherefore ?" quoth the knight, and quickly he naks, afraid lest he had failed in forms and ceremonies ; but the lady blessed him and gave this reason : "So good a knight as Gawayn is rightly held to be, and the very glass of courtesy, could not lightly have remained so long with a lady without craving a kiss by his courtesy, by some request of some trifle at the end of a speech." Then quoth Gawayn : "Certainly, be it as it pleases you ; I shall kiss at your commandment, as a knight ought, and fear lest he displease you, so plead it no more." She comes nearer with that and takes him in her arms, bends lovingly down and kisses the hero ; they duly commend one another to Christ ; she goes out at the door without more ado. And he prepares to rise, and makes haste, calls to his chamberlain, chooses his clothes, goes forth, when he was ready, blithely to mass, and then he went to meat who kept himself in honour, and made merry all day with game till the moon rose ; was never warrior more fairly received between two so worthy dames, the older and the young ; much solace was there among them."

aimlessly on and say a good thing now and then by chance ; he treads so surely, even on thin ice ; he prepares for his 'effects' and achieves them with such consummate skill, that we hail him as a craftsman of the calibre though not of the genius of Chaucer, and rank him as a high third among fourteenth-century poets.

CHAPTER V.

FIFTEENTH-CENTURY POETRY.

PERHAPS no very great harm would be done if we had imitated one of Sterne's vagaries and left this chapter a blank. Fifteenth-century poetry has its champions, especially among those who sacrifice truth to smartness, and whose temperament inclines them to appear in the character of devil's advocate. These people say that this is an instance—certainly not unknown in the history of literature—of 'giving a dog a bad name and hanging him.' Ultimately, the student must judge for himself. We shall give expression to the views of this school, and, as we differ from them *longo intervallo*, we shall give still fuller expression to our own. If the reader is not satisfied, he must do what he should do in every case, satisfy himself by personal examination of the works referred to.

The plain truth is that, if for convenience we treat of
A Barren Cen- Henryson in connection with the Scotch school
tury. of the early sixteenth century, there are hardly more than three English poets in the whole of the fifteenth century worthy of the name, and one of them is King James I. of Scotland. The fifty years after Lydgate ceased writing are almost absolutely barren of poetry. The first fifty years of the century boast no stars of the first or second magnitude. The poetry of that age is poor alike in form and in substance. In substance it shows a retrogression into the middle ages. In metrical form it shows at once a forward movement and an inevitable decline, as we shall explain. Were it otherwise, the poverty of the century in mere mass of poetical output—its warmest defenders cannot require the fingers of the second hand in their enumer-

ation of its poets—would rank it low. The demands of the times must certainly have entailed ‘scribbler’s palsy’ on poor, prolific versatile Lydgate; for Maccenas arose in the fifteenth century, such as ‘Good Duke Humphrey’ of Gloucester, the brother of Henry V., who both encouraged learning and patronised men of letters; and, moreover, the numbers of the reading public were increasing rapidly enough to make it an element to be reckoned with. Yet the poetic supply failed, and printing and prose had to be called in to meet the demand.

It has been frequently observed that great literary movements and outbursts are separated from one another by periods of comparative quietude or mediocrity in the same sphere of activity. The fact is too patent in English literature to admit of doubt. The ages of Chaucer, of Shakespeare, of Pope, and of Wordsworth, stand out from the intervening periods with well-marked distinction. The phenomenon has been compared, almost *ad nauseam*, either to the alternation of the crest and hollow of a wave, or to the oscillations of a pendulum. It has not been so frequently, if ever, remarked, that the oscillations are increasing in rapidity. Rather more than two centuries separate Chaucer and Shakespeare, about a century and a quarter separate Shakespeare and Pope, while not more than a century intervenes between Pope and Wordsworth. In poetry, the fifteenth century is the trough of the wave, the backward swing of the pendulum. The explanation of this fact we have now to seek.

‘From Chaucer downwards,’ says Courthope,¹ ‘we may distinctly observe in English poetry the confluence of three great streams of thought, which blend in a single channel without any of them ever quite losing its separate life and identity. Of these the first, and perhaps the most powerful, is the genius of Race, the stream of Anglo-Saxon language, character, and custom, modified by the influence of Scandinavian imagination, as well as by all the impulses and ideas derived from the Latin nations through the Norman Conquest. The second

¹ It is impossible to avoid quoting this author, who has thrown such a flood of light on the period with which we are dealing, in his ‘History of English Poetry.’

is the tradition of Education systematised by the Latin Church, many traces of which still survive in the courses of our universities and public schools. The third is the tradition of Graeco-Roman Culture, carried through the barbarous ages in many slender ducts and channels, which, mingling the spirit of the ancient world with the infant civilisation of Europe, prepared the way for the great revival of arts and letters commonly known as the Renaissance.' We have seen how Chaucer, with growing power of originality, gradually threw off the shackles alike of scholasticism and of ineffective classicism, and how his greatest work gives freest expression to the *natural and national* potentialities of his art. But Chaucer was so far in advance of his age that his successors had to fall back into the ranks of medievalism in order to bring their readers up into line even with them. The literary tradition survived, with its characteristic forms; but they were hollow forms. The living spirit of literature had exhausted itself for the time, and lifeless imitations masqueraded in the outworn garbs of allegory and romance. 'The forces of feudalism,' says the writer we last quoted, 'are seen to resume their sway. Instead of the stories of common life developed from the *fabliau*, instead of the moving adventures of Griselda and Constance anticipating the pathetic action of the later drama; the reader finds himself again in the exhausted regions of romance, travelling under the direction of Lydgate through the thrice-told tales of Thebes and Troy, in the midst of narratives of Paladins of the class of Sir Thopas.' But, as we know, it was only a dying flicker of feudalism. In reality, in the fifteenth century, the transition from the medieval to the modern world was gradually taking place. Vast social and political changes were in progress, to which literature had to attune itself. Old subjects were played out, the new subjects were not yet ready, and there was no mighty seer to anticipate them.

But there was one great change, distinct from the foregoing and yet connected with them, which we
Decline in Metrical Form. have already spoken of as an advance and a decline. It was the final disinfection of the language.

An inevitable result of tendencies inherent in the language and of the disintegrating forces playing upon it from without, it was the last step in the progression from the synthetic to the analytic stage in the history of the mother-tongue. We do not, of course, mean that inflexion totally disappeared after the year 1400, since traces of it still survive; but that the final syllabic *e*, of which Chaucer made such abundant use in his versification, was dead in the spoken language soon after the close of the fourteenth century at latest, and that where it appears in poetry after that date it is of the nature of a poetical licence, and cannot be reduced to rule. Chaucer has final mute *es* and final syllabic *es*; but there is this essential difference between him and his followers and imitators, that his use of the syllabic *e* is subject to rules which have been inductively formulated, whilst theirs is not; that his syllabic *e* has an etymological force, whilst theirs is one final *e* selected out of several merely for the convenience of making it a metrical syllable. An ordinarily sensitive ear and eye can scan Chaucer at the first reading; his successors allow no such liberty to be taken with their poetry. It is not as a rule that it *won't* scan, but that it requires to be carefully scanned before it can be read, and our sympathies are with the reader who prefers to break his neck over it. Whether the poets of the fifteenth century had lost the secret of Chaucer's metre, or whether they recognised that his system was no longer possible for them, but had not the genius or the ingenuity or the 'gumption' to accept the altered conditions and consistently renounce the use of the syllabic *e*, it is not possible to say with certainty: possibly they never faced the difficulty fairly and squarely, but only felt in a vague way that their lot was cast in troublous times for metrists, and that somehow or other they did not attain to the music of their master. Certain it is that both Hoccleve and Lydgate bewail their own prosodical shortcomings in a way that must be very awkward for their apologists.¹

¹ Lydgate:

'And trouth of metro I sette also a- syde,
For of that art I hadde as tho no gnyde

If the Chaucerian tradition was handed down directly to Hoccleve, any one it must have been to Thomas Hoccleve (1368 ?—1450 ?)—who was born at Hockliffe in Bedfordshire, and became a clerk of the Privy Seal—for, in a famous passage, he claims to have been a dull pupil of the great master ;¹

‘ But welc awaye, so is myn herte wo,
That the honour of English tounge is deed,
Of which I was wonte have counsell and rede.

‘ O maister dere and fader reverent,
My maister Chaucer ! floure of eloquence,
Mirroure of fructuous entendement,
O universal fadir in science,
Allas ! that thou thyne excellent prudence
In thy bedde mortel myghtest not bequethe ;
What eyled Dethe ? alas, why wold he sle the ? . .

‘ Symple is my goste, and scars my letterure,
Unto youre excellence for to write
Mynne inward love, and yit in aventure
Wol I me put, thogh I can but lyte ;²
My dere maister—God his soule quyte—
And fader, Chaucer, fayne wold have me taught,
But I was dulle, and lerned lyte or naught.’

It is as needless to moralise on these lines as it is to spend much time over Hoccleve. They are a very fair specimen of his art, and yet their sole charm consists in a certain half-affected self-depreciation, a motive to which he not infrequently gives play. His two best-known works are ‘The Governail of Princes’ and ‘La Male Regle de T. Hoccleve.’ The former was compiled, as the author tells us, from the ‘De Regimine Principum’ of Ægidius de Colonna, the ‘Secreta Secretorum,’ and the original of

Me to reduce, when I went a-wronge :
I tooke none hede nouthur of shorte nor longa.

Hoccleve :

‘ Whan he beholdeth how unconningly
My boke is metrid.’

¹ Lydgate makes a somewhat similar claim in his ‘Temple of Glass’ :

‘ And Chaucer now, alas, is not alyve
Me to reforme, or to be my rede,
For lacke of whom slower is my speche.

² The juxtaposition of two stresses in this line is intolerable. Dr. Furnivall, who has edited Hoccleve’s *Minor Poems* for the Early English Text Society, says : ‘ So long as he can count ten syllables by his fingers he is content.’ It would seem that he is sometimes content with less.

Caxton's 'Game of Chess,' ostensibly for the edification of Prince Henry (Henry V.), but not without a view to his own edification in the matter of arrears of pay. It has an original Prologue, in which an old man puts leading questions to Hoccleve and draws from him a confession which, from its personal flavour, is more exhilarating than the rest of the poem. But Hoccleve's greatest merit is the portrait of Chaucer which he had executed on the margin of a manuscript:¹

'To putte othere men in remembraunce
Of his persone, I have heer his lyknesse
Do make, to this ende, in sothfastnesse,
That they, that have of him lest thought and minde,
By this peynture may ageyn him finde.'

John Lydgate (1370 ?—1446 ?), the monk of Bury, was born at Lydgate, near Newmarket: 'Have me excused, I was born in Lydegate.' He spent the greater part of his life, wrote most of his works, and died, in the monastery of Bury St. Edmunds.² For us Lydgate's life is his poetry, and it is not too interesting a life. He was an inveterate and incurable versifier and scribbler. His longer works alone total a hundred and thirty thousand lines. True he shows considerable versatility, but it is the versatility of the literary hack; he will write you anything to order. Witness the length and variety of the list of his works. We have seen that patrons of letters arose in those days: they seem with one accord to have patronised Lydgate. Moreover, they appear to have thought that the longer and drier the work upon which the poor monk's talents were engaged, the better for every one concerned—him, them, and the reading public—or else they desired to see as much as possible for their money; so that it is only occasionally that he managed to squeeze in between two portentously long works a shorter poem with autobiographical touches that we could ill spare. Some of these we must quote, but first let us glance at his works.

We do not give a complete list of his works here; for the

¹ Opposite stanza 714 of the 'Governail of Princes,' MS. Harl., 4,800.

² See Carlyle's 'Past and Present,' Part II., for a delightful account of life in this monastery in the twelfth century.

simple reason that Ritson enumerates two hundred and fifty-one. And for some a mere mention
 His Works. suffices, such as 'The Complaint of the Black Knight,' 'Reason and Sensuality' and his other minor allegories, 'The Churl and the Bird,' the 'Life of Our Lady' (written for Henry V.), the 'Dance of Death,' 'Guy of Warwick,' and his numerous hagiographies, legends, 'pageants,' fables, and *fabliaux*. His principal allegorical poem, the 'Temple of Glass,'¹ owes its suggestion, of course, to Chaucer's 'House of Fame,' but it is purely conventional in treatment and lacks the delightful satirical humour that constitutes the chief charm of 'Dant in English.' From allegory Lydgate turned to romance, and between 1412 and 1420 translated, also at the command of Henry V., the 'Historia Trojana' of Guido delle Colonne into the thirty thousand verses of his 'Troy Book.' Next he wrote his additional Canterbury Tale, the 'Story of Thebes' (about 1421), condensing the 'Thebaid' of Statius within the limits required for a tale 'in the spirit of a lawyer's clerk.' A Prologue explains to us that Lydgate had the good fortune to find Chaucer's pilgrims in an inn at Canterbury, and was requested by mine Host to tell the first tale on the homeward journey.

His next commissions may indicate a change of literary fashion in the direction of moral and religious works, for from 1426 to 1438 he was engaged upon English renderings of the first part of De Guileville's 'Pèlerinage de la Vie Humaine' (which must have been one of Langland's models), and of Boccaccio's 'De Casibus Illustrium Virorum,' 'the boke calledde John Bochas, descrivinge the Falle of Princes.' The latter, a veritable *pièce de résistance*, consisted of thirty-six thousand lines; but in spite of its length it retained its popularity until it was superseded in the next century by the 'Mirror for Magistrates.' It was commissioned by Humphrey, Duke of Gloucester. No wonder Lydgate's heart sometimes failed him when this interminable work was in progress. Once he writes to his patron that 'his purse's empty stomach is so turned upside

¹ In consequence of a mistake of Warton's this has often been attributed to Hawes (q. v.).

down that there is no leech or apothecary in Bury town who is able to cure it.' At another time he seems to throw down his pen in sheer despair at the magnitude of his task :

'I stode checkmate for feare when I gan see
In my way how littel I had runne.'

From long 'wearyful' poems such as these it is refreshing to turn to the autobiographical and realistic 'Testament' and 'London Lickpenny,'¹ the former of which tells of the freaks and follies of his youth and early manhood. The latter is a short poem, consisting of sixteen of Chaucer's stanzas, of which the following are a specimen :

'Then unto London I dyd me hyc,
Of all the land it beareth the pryse :
" Hot pescodes," one began to crye,
" Strabery rype," and " cherries in the ryse " ;
One bad me come nere and by some spyce,
Peper and safforne they gan me bede,
But for lack of mony I myght not sped.
Then to the Chepe I gan me drawne,
Where mutch people I saw for to stand ;
One ofred me velvet, sylke and lawne,
An other he taketh me by the hande,
" Here is Parys thred, the fynest in the land " ;
I never was used to such thinges in dede,
And, wanting mony, I myght not sped.
Then went I forth by London stone,
Throughout all Canwyke streete ;
Drapers mutch cloth me offred anone ;
Then met I one, cryed " hot shepes fecte " ;
One cryde " makerell " ; " ryshes grene " an other gan greete ;
On bad me by a hood to cover my head ;
But for want of mony I myght not be sped.
Then I hyed me into Est-Chepe ;
One cryes " rybbes of befe," and many a pye ;
Pewter pottes they clattered on a henpe ;
There was harpe, pype, and mynstralsye.
" Yea, by cock ! " " nay, by cock ! " some began crye ;
Some songe of Jenken and Julian for there mede ;
But for lack of mony I myght not sped.'

When a *soi-disant* critic maintains that as a descriptive poet Lydgate 'stands almost on the level of Chaucer'; that 'his style is beautiful, fluent, copious, and eminently musical,' and so on; it is easy to

¹ 'Lickpenny' is explained as an epithet of London, which licks up the pence of country people,

see that he has mistaken his vocation. Even Gray must be pronounced guilty of exaggeration when he says that Lydgate touches 'the very heart-strings of compassion with so masterly a hand as to merit a place among the greatest of poets.' The mass of judicious opinion is on the other side. Lydgate expresses unbounded admiration for Chaucer—

'My maister Chaucer, with his fresh comedies,
Is deed, alas! cheef poete of Bretayne'—

but he follows him very far off. In versification they cannot be compared; even Hoccleve, with much less poetical power, rimes up his lucubrations in more musical fashion. In every other respect the comparison is all in Chaucer's favour. 'Chaucer's easy and agreeable diffuseness,' says Ten Brink, 'degenerates in Lydgate into intolerable loquacity, his *naïveté* into platitudes, his bright reflective moralising tone into pedantry. Almost all the externals of the model are exaggerated or applied in the wrong place by the imitator.'

King James I. of Scotland learnt the Chaucerian tradition
James I. in England, took it with him to his native
of Scotland. country, and thus became the parent of the vigorous Scottish school of poets that flourished at the close of the century. His life is fully as romantic as his poetry. Born in 1394, he was taken prisoner off Flamborough Head in 1406 by an English ship, doubtless with the connivance of the Scottish regent Albany. For nineteen years James was confined in English prisons—first in the Tower, then at Nottingham, and for the last ten years in Windsor Castle. This did not prevent his receiving a royally liberal education, and he even served with distinction in France in 1421 in the wars of Henry V. Early in 1423 he saw from his prison window at Windsor the lady 'who became successively the inspiration of his verse, the means of his liberation, and the partner of his throne'—Lady Jane Beaufort, the niece of Henry IV. They were married the following year, a ransom of £40,000 was arranged, and James was crowned king of Scotland. Thirteen years later, when James was murdered by Sir Robert Graham, his faithful queen was wounded in his defence.¹

¹ In stanza 187 of his poem, James, by a curious coincidence, had said of his wife; 'That from the doth his man scho has defendit.'

The poem that enshrines their love in undying verse is the 'King's Quair' (Book). It consists of a hundred and ninety-seven of Chaucer's stanzas—afterwards called, from this poem, 'rime royal'—not always quite unhalting in metre, but running with far easier movement, as will be seen, than the attempts of Hoccleve and Lydgate. The 'argument' of an allegory is always the most uninteresting literary skeleton obtainable, and the dry bones of this allegory are no exception to the rule. Like Chaucer, he is reading during a sleepless night; the book is Boethius' 'De Consolatione Philosophiae.' At length the matin-bell

'Said to me, "Tell on, man, quhat the befell,"'

So he tells his history and makes his 'plaint.' But the next night he falls asleep from weariness, and, *mirabile dictu*, has a dream, in which he visits in turn Venus, Minerva, and Fortune. When he awakes a turtle-dove brings

'The newis glad that blisfull ben and sure
Of thy comfort.'

And the poem concludes with a song of gratitude for his good fortune. The 'King's Quair' marks the culmination of the chivalrous allegory as a living form. Henceforward the allegory tends to become a mere mould, into which heterogeneous inorganic material is cast. These are two of the concluding stanzas:

'Go litill tretise, nakit of eloquence,
Causing simplece and povertee to wit ;
And pray the redeer to have pacience
Of thy defeaute, and to supporten it,
Of his gudnesse thy brukilnesse to knyit,
And his tong for to reule and to sterc,
That thy defautis helit may bene here. . . .

Unto the impnis³ of my maisteris dere,
Gowere and Chaucere, that on the steppis satt
Of rethorike quibill thai were lyvand here,
Superlative as poetis laureate,
In moralitee and eloquence ornate,
I recommend my buk in lynis sevin,
And eke thair saulis un-to the blisse of hevin. Amen.'

¹ To be known.

² Thy brokenness to knit together.

³ Hymns.

The poetical chroniclers of the century cannot find place in a work of this scope. Andrew of Wyntoun's *Ballads, etc.* 'Original Chronicle,'—'original' because concerned with the origins of things—has been already mentioned in connection with Barbour. We need only name John Harding's 'Chronicle,' for even Henry Morley says of its author, 'He has neither the mind of a poet nor mechanical skill as a versifier.' Ballads, as a class of composition, hardly fall within the range of a sketch of the development of English poetry, because they are usually deteriorated remains of other classes of compositions, reduced to their present forms by nameless authors, often men of the highest talent, for presentation to popular audiences. No English ballads date back earlier than the fourteenth century. Some of the most famous—such as 'Chery Chase,' the 'Battle of Otterburn,' and the 'Nut-brown Maid,' almost certainly date, in their original forms, from the fifteenth century. When the same ballad is found both in English and Scottish settings, the Scottish version is often the finer of the two.

CHAPTER VI.

PROSE FROM 1350 TO 1500 A.D.

IN the earlier stages of a language the history of its prose is much less important than that of its verse. Earlier History of Prose. A noble poetical style is evolved much earlier than a worthy prose style. Poetry is not the simplest and most natural mode of speech, and therefore in its earliest origins, and from the very conditions of its existence, it is necessarily self-conscious. Hence there is a tendency, in the lower stages of civilisation, to enshrine everything, that is thought worthy of a permanent form, in verse; and from this tendency arose the miscellaneous compilations and encyclopedias in doggerel verse which abounded in the middle ages. But in official and legal documents, in laws and charters, prose had been employed from an early date in the European vernaculars, and oratory and Christian homilies must have furnished good models of unwritten prose. Moreover, the earliest extant English prose must have been the work of ecclesiastics who can hardly fail to have been acquainted with some Latin patristic literature. Thus, though the earliest piece of connected prose writing in our language¹ is crude and unsophisticated in the extreme,² little more than a hundred years elapse before we come across a series of Old English annals,³ narrating Alfred's spirited struggle with the Danes, which are certainly contemporary, are as spirited as the events they

¹ The entry under the year 755 A.D. in the 'Anglo-Saxon Chronicle,' but certainly not written until about thirty years later.

² It evidently never occurred to the writer to see whether what he had written would convey the meaning he intended to one who knew nothing of the circumstances, for he changes speakers and passes from direct to oblique narration without any warning or indication.

³ See 'Anglo-Saxon Chronicle,' Parker MS., 804-97 A.D.

describe, and seem to indicate indubitably that the annalist rose to the height of his talents to meet the dignity of the situation and thus became a conscious prose stylist. This was near the close of Alfred's reign, or about 900 A.D., and for the next five centuries English prose style shows very little advance on the achievement of this early unknown historian. The narrative of the Peterborough 'Chronicle' for Stephen's reign, the prose of the 'Ancient Riwle' in the early thirteenth century, different as they are in tone and manner, both from each other and from the annals of the Danish war, hardly surpass the latter in the matter of style.

Our early prose falls into two main classes, the one original and therefore national, the other derived, imitated, translated, universal. Unfortunately the former class, which is by far the more interesting, is also by far the smaller. The latter is often moral, religious, didactic to the point of dulness and *ennui*. Moreover, it was exposed to sources of contamination in foreign literatures from which native prose suffered in a much less degree. Towards the close of the mediæval period the native prose became submerged under the tide of foreign influences, only, however, to reappear in the fifteenth century as a self-contained original prose, dominating the influences by which it had before been dominated.

'The fourteenth century,' says an accomplished critic, 'is not in prose what it is in poetry. There is no great revolution, like that which, through the agency of Chaucer, brought English poetry out of its corners and bye-ways, and made it fit to be presented at the King's court. English prose, which had been decent and respectable hundreds of years before Chaucer, continued to be respectable after him. Prose was not affected in Chaucer's time by the revival of classical taste in Italy. The lessons of artistic construction which Chaucer learned from the poems of Boccaccio were not paralleled by any imitations in his prose of the classical elegances of the "Decameron." . . . In the fourteenth century one need not be surprised to find that a good deal of the prose of all the countries of Europe is a little monotonous and jaded. For the general character

of progress had been a levelling down of national distinctions, and a distribution over the whole field of the same commonplaces, so that one finds the same books current everywhere, the same stories: the popular learning in the vernacular tongues became almost as clear of any national or local character as the philosophy of the schools. Naturally there was some loss of vigour in the process, and the later medieval writers are exhausting sometimes with their want of distinctive peculiarities, their contented rehearsals of old matter in a hackneyed phraseology. Prose literature taught and preached so much that it lost all spring and freshness.'

Three prose writers, and three only, in the latter half of the fourteenth century, demand notice at our hands—'Mandeville,' Trevisa, and Wyclif; and two of them will not delay us very long'. At best the works that we associate with the two former names are mainly translations. The same is true of Wyclif's 'Bible'; but it is the peculiar distinction of more English translations of the Bible than one, that they possess a literary value distinct from their value *qua* translations. Wyclif's rightful place as the father of modern English prose was long usurped by 'Mandeville,' and Professor Saintsbury still claims the title for the latter in the modified form of 'the father of all such as use modern English prose for purposes of profane delight.' As to Sir John Mandeville, who gives himself out as a native of St. Albans and as having travelled in Asia and Africa for forty years in the service of the Sultan and the Emperor of China, we must be pardoned if we repeat what Betsey Prig said with reference to the immortal Mrs. Harris, that 'we don't believe there's no sich a person.' Mr. E. B. Nicholson has established the facts that the 'Voyage and Travel of Sir John Maundeville' was the work of a physician of Liège, Jean de Bourgogne, dating from the third quarter of the fourteenth century, that it was originally written in French, but that Latin and English versions appeared in rapid succession, possibly with a view to maintaining the hoax. It rapidly became enormously popular. 'Its style,' says Saintsbury, 'is simple, clear, and by no means awkward or inelegant. The sentences are of moderate length, and

the clauses are connected and arranged with an orderliness evidently dictated by practice in Latin composition. . . . But the real charm of the book lies in a combination of simplicity and colour which is eminently picturesque.' The following extract will serve as an illustration :

'And so often wente Machomete to this heremyte, that alle his men weren wrothe: for he wolde gladly here this heremyte preche, and make his men wake alle nyght: and therefore his men thoughten to putte the heremyte to deth: and so befelle upon a nyght, that Machomete was dronken of gode wyn, and he felle on slepe; and his men toke Machometes swerd out of his schethe whils he slepte, and therewith thei slowgh this heremyte, and putten his swerd al bloody in his schethe agen. And at morwe, whan he foud the heremyte ded, he was fulle gory and wroth, and wolde have don his men to deth: but thei alle with on accord seyde, that he himself had slayn him, whan he was dronken, and schewed him his swerd alle bloody: and he trowed that thei hadden seyde soth. And than he cursed the wyn, and alle tho that drynken it. And therefore Sarrazines, that ben devout, drynken nevere no wyn: but summe drynken it prevyly.'

Ralph Higden (died 1363), a monk of the Abbey of St. Werburgh, Chester, who has been doubtfully identified with Randall Higgenet and thus (but again doubtfully) made the author of the Chester cycle of Mysteries, wrote a Latin history of the world in seven books, called 'Polychronicon,' which became widely popular. The last four books deal mainly with English history, bringing the story down to 1342. In 1387 John of Trevisa, vicar of Berkeley in Gloucestershire, with the encouragement of his patron Lord Berkeley, completed an English translation of the 'Polychronicon,' to which he made a few additions of his own. From Trevisa we glean several important facts for the social history of his century. For example, when he reaches the statement in Higden, that 'oplondysch men wol lykne (liken) ham-sylf to gentil men, and fondeth (endeavour) with gret bysynes for to speke Freynsch, for to be more ytold of,' Trevisa adds the following instructive comment :

'Thys manere was moche y-used to-forc the furste moreyn (pestilence), and ys seththe somdel ychaunged. For Johan Cornwal, a mayster of gramere, chayngede the lore in grammer-scole, and construccion of Freynsch in-to Englysch; and Richard Pencrych lurnede that mauere techyng of hym, and other men of Pencrych; so that now, the yer of oure Lord a thousand thre hondred foure score and fyve, of the secunde kyng Richard after the conquest nyne, in al the

gramer-scoles of Engelond childern leveth Frensch and constructh and lurneth an (in) Englysch, and habbeth ther-by avauntage in on syde and desavauntage yn another; here (their) avauntage ys, that a lurneth here gramer yn lasse tyme than childern wer ywoned to do—disavauntage ys, that now childern of gramer-scole conneth no more Frensch than can (knows) here lift heele.¹

No deep philosophy of literature is needed to show that

Wyclif. Wyclif is as much the outcome of his times as

Langland, or, in another direction, Wat Tyler. Moreover, it is not difficult to see that they are all three the outcome of the same movements and tendencies—hatred of papal domination both in spiritual and temporal affairs; distrust and dislike, on the part of the nation at large, of the ever-increasing inconsistency between the preaching and the practice of the professedly religious classes; and intolerance of the social and political condition of the labouring classes, of the incidence of fiscal burdens, and of the corruption rife (*teste* Langland) in all departments of public life.

It is impossible to follow closely here the somewhat tangled skein of Wyclif's life. He was born about 1320, lived the greater part of his life at Oxford, where he became Master of Balliol and obtained great influence and a powerful following, and died quietly as rector of Lutterworth¹ on the last day of the year 1384. He was the most powerful thinker of his century in England—far greater as a thinker than as a writer. He had many enemies, and they did not decrease in power and numbers as he followed out his political, social, and spiritual revolt to its conclusions with relentless logic. From the national position with reference to papal interference he passed on to a general attack upon the Pope as antichrist, in which he was aided by the papal schism of 1378; he examined the doctrine of the Eucharist, and declared war against transubstantiation; he worked out a theory of 'dominion,' divine and civil, which in the latter application meant sheer communism; after 1381 he attacked the mendicant orders with untiring bitterness.² It can hardly be wondered

¹ The fine old parish church is still haunted by memories of its great rector, and is well worthy of a visit.

² He frequently denotes them by the word *CAIM* (= *Cuin*), made up of their initials: Carmelites, Augustines, Jacobites (= Dominicans), Minorites (= Franciscans).

at that he brought on himself the persecution of his papal and ecclesiastical enemies, and gradually alienated many or most of his friends. In 1377 he was summoned to appear at St. Paul's, but escaped through the intervention of John of Gaunt. The Pope used the particularly ineffective machinery of 'bulls' against him, but his University warmly took his side. In 1378 he had to meet the bishops in London. The young king's mother and the populace both intervened in his behalf, and the trial proved abortive. At last, in 1382, he succeeded in alienating even Oxford and John of Gaunt; his principal followers recanted; Dr. Nicholas of Hereford, his collaborator in the translation of the Bible, disappeared; and yet Wyclif himself was allowed to retire unmolested to Lutterworth for the rest of his days.

It will be seen that Wyclif's stupendous powers and energies found vent in three directions: as a
 His Work. thinker, as a priest, and as a translator of the Bible. In the second capacity, he not only preached and ministered to his own congregation 'in the language that they used to speke,' but sent his 'poor priests' through the length and breadth of the land, preaching his religious and communistic doctrines, and opposing a life of severe poverty to the luxury and indulgence of the so-called mendicant orders. Hence arose the sect called Lollards. Although the Act *De heretico comburendo*, gradually enforced with increasing severity, seemed in time completely to stamp out the 'Lollard heresy,' no philosophic mind will suppose for one moment that Wyclif did not help to prepare the way for the Reformation. He demanded what Henry VIII. carried out—the suppression of the monasteries. Czech students at English universities carried back to Bohemia copies of the master's works (some of which exist only in a Czech translation); the Hussites are therefore disciples of Wyclif, and so more remotely are the Moravian Brethren and the Waldensians. Finally, as Jusserand points out, there is not wanting a link of connection between Wesleyanism and Wyclif, for John Wesley attributed his conversion to a Moravian.

But Wyclif's fame rests chiefly and rightly on the translation of the Bible, of which he was the inspirer and

part-author—the first complete translation of the Bible in English. He undertook the New Testament himself, Dr. Nicholas of Hereford the Old. The latter had completed as far as Baruch in the Apocrypha when he disappeared. Wyclif finished the Old Testament in 1382, and commenced a revision, which was completed after his death by John Purvey. The popularity of this translation is attested by the enormous number—one hundred and seventy—of manuscript copies which have escaped all condemnations and prohibitions and are extant to-day. Wyclif's style is not at its best here; he translated from the Vulgate, and his fear of departing from the literal meaning led him into a close imitation of Latin participial and relative constructions, a blemish which Purvey as far as possible removed from his revision. But the master's achievement in spreading, among classes hitherto reached only by the wandering minstrel, what was after all a noble model of style and a masterpiece in various kinds of literature, is literally inestimable in its potential effects upon the later history of literature. In his numerous other prose works in English—sermons, pamphlets, and polemical treatises—where he was freed from the constraints that hampered him in translation, he shows greater flexibility of construction and variation of style. 'Wyclif's literary importance,' says Ten Brink, 'lies in the fact that he extended the domain of English prose and enhanced its powers of expression. He accustomed it to terse reasoning, and perfected it as an instrument for expressing rigorous logical thought and argument; he brought it into the service of great ideas and questions of the day, and made it the medium of polemics and satire. And, above all, he raised it to the dignity of the national language of the Bible.' The following passage illustrates Wyclif's Latinisms:—

'And anon he constreynede his disciplis for to stize up in-to a boot, that thei schulden passe biforn him over the see to Bethsayda, the while he lefte the peple. And whanne he hadde left hem, he wente in-to an hil, for to preie. And whanne evenyng was, the boot was in the middyl see, and he aloone in the lond; and he sy3 hem travelinge in rowynge; sothli the wynd was contrarie to hem. And aboute the fourthe waking of the nyzt, he wandrynge on the see cam to hem, and wolde passe hem. And thei, as thei sy3en him wandrynge

on the see, gessiden him for to be a fantum, and crieden ; forsoth alle sygen hym, and thei weren disturblid. And anon he spak with hem, and seide to hem, "Triste 3e, I am ; nyle 3e drede." And he cam up to hem in-to the boot, and the wynd cecsside.'

There are not very many prose works in the fifteenth century that require detailed notice, probably The Fifteenth Century. not more than three or four. Yet the century is of the uttermost moment in literary history, because all the influences that moulded and fashioned the prose and verse of the next two centuries may be seen at this time coming into being, defining themselves, and growing in volume. It is the century of the rediscovery of America by Columbus. It is the century of the invention of printing from movable types, an invention which did as much good for the spread of literature as it did harm in another direction by petrifying the forms of words and thus rendering a phonetic spelling, which should keep pace with changes of sound, impossible. It is *the* century of 'the revival of learning' or Renaissance. Printing, the Renaissance, the patron of letters, and the Paston Letters, each demand a word of special mention.

The introduction of printing into England will always bring honour to the name of William Caxton Introduction of Printing. (died 1491), even when that art has been superseded by a later invention. It is a remarkable fact that, until our own day, hardly any printing has been produced in England to equal Caxton's. Some of the earliest founts, imitated from the almost perfect handwriting of the best manuscripts, are of surpassing elegance in design. The earliest books printed in English, the 'Recuyell of the Histories of Troy' and the 'Game and Play of Chess,' were both printed on the Continent. The first book printed in England was Lord Rivers's 'Dicts and Sayings of the Philosophers,' 'enprynted by me william Caxton, at westmestre,' in 1477. All these three works were translations from French. From that time till his death Caxton printed some seventy books. He was almost equally active in making translations, to the number of twenty-one, mostly from French, but 'Reynard the Fox' from Dutch. In these he made the fullest use of a translator's liberty, and

PREFACE.

Child's History of India is an attempt to meet a want. The want seemed to the author to admit of no question that children in our schools should grow up in the knowledge of the central facts of the history of their own Country, popularly told.

It is only the lower forms of Public Schools—commencing from the 3rd downwards, that the book is aimed to suit. The demand for a third edition shows that the publication has been found in some measure useful, and the author could not let this Edition issue without returning to his many critics and the Public his warm acknowledgments.

The third edition has undergone a thorough revision.

CALCUTTA.
February 1889. }

further enlarged our still unformed vocabulary by a considerable infusion of foreign words. In not a few cases he overstepped the bounds of this liberty, and cut the difficulty of translating by importing even Dutch words without change.

It has been already remarked that the private patron of letters became prominent in this century. Other
The Patron of Letters. great nobles, besides Humphrey, Duke of Gloucester, 'took an active and personal part of the literary revival. The warrior, Sir John Fastolf' (we are quoting J. R. Green), 'was a well-known lover of books. Earl Rivers was himself one of the authors of the day. . . . A friend [of Caxton's] of far greater intellectual distinction, however, than these was found in John Tiptoft, Earl of Worcester. He had wandered during the reign of Henry the Sixth in search of learning to Italy, had studied at her universities, and become a teacher at Padua, where the elegance of his Latinity drew tears from the most learned of the Popes, Pius the Second, better known as Æneas Sylvius.' Tiptoft made an English translation of Cicero's 'De Amicitia.'

It may seem supremely ridiculous to devote a single
The Renaissance. paragraph to a subject about which volumes have been written—the Revival of Learning. It would perhaps be still more ridiculous to pass it over in silence. There has been as much misconception as to the real meaning and significance of the Renaissance as with regard to what Bacon did for the inductive method. The word has been variously applied so as to cover exclusively one and another phase of the same great movement. To us it seems that it may not unfairly be defined as the revived influence of the great Greek and Latin classics upon modern thought and literature. Like the poor, the classics have always been with us throughout this era. But in the middle ages texts had become corrupt, scholarship had decayed, Latin had ousted Greek from its due position of pre-eminence. The Schoolmen effected a partial revival, but within very narrow limits. The real date of the Earlier Renaissance is the fourteenth century, the century of Dante, Petrarch, Boccaccio, and Chaucer.

From that time onwards the interest in the revival of classical studies quickened in every department. Greek was taught in Florence by a Greek before the close of the fourteenth century, and before 1425 Aurispa brought over four hundred Greek manuscripts to Italy. In 1453—the birth-year of the Later Renaissance—Constantinople was captured by the Turks, and learned Greeks fled to Italy and wherever they could find a hospitable refuge, taking with them the priceless treasures of their ancient literature. Cosmo de Medici welcomed to Florence with equal warmth Argyropoulos, who was devoted to the study and teaching of Aristotle, and Plotino the Platonist, though he himself favoured the philosophy of Plato. In 1488 Vitelli was teaching Greek at Oxford, and three years later the work was carried on by an accomplished Englishman, William Grocyn.

The 'Paston Letters' belong more to history than to literature. They consist of a number of letters written by or to members of the Paston family in Norfolk, ranging in date from 1422 to 1509, and throwing much light on the domestic and social life of the century.

The fillip that Wyclif had given to the development of English prose is completely lost as far as John Pecock's *'Repressor.'* Capgrave (1393—1464) is concerned. Living and dying at King's Lynn, remote from the centres of culture, he was untouched by the movements of his day, and his 'Chronicle of England' (to 1418) is as devoid of literary interest as its author is of personal interest. Quite different is the case with Reginald Pecock, successively Bishop of St. Asaph and of Chichester. He was emphatically a man to whom the lines did not fall in pleasant places. Having become famous as an assailant of the Lollard heresies, he failed in his great work, the 'Repressor of over-much Blaming the Clergy' (1449), to propitiate either his friends or his foes. Indeed, he became, somewhat unaccountably, the object of such bitter persecution, that he had to recant his errors, and spent the last few years of his life in confinement, sequestered from his bishopric. He died about 1460. His 'Repressor' defended the 'governances' of the Church attacked by the Lollards,

such as images, pilgrimages, endowments, the clerical and religious orders, and the supremacy of the Pope. He wrote also a 'Treatise of Faith.' Pecock's works have been called the earliest specimens of strictly controversial prose. In style pure and simple he shows no advance upon Wyclif, but rather a retrogression, for he clothed the refinements of the schools in a vernacular diction that is popular to the verge of archaicism, as may be seen in the following brief extract :

'And if this now seid is trewe of a man which can rede in bokis stories wiiton, that myche sooner and in schortir tyme and with lasse labour and peyn in his brayn he schal come into remembraunce of a long storie bi sijt, than bi the heering of othere mennys reding or bi heering of his owne reding ; miche rather this is trewe of alle tho persoones whiche kunnen not rede in bokis, namelich eithen thei schulen not fynde men so redi for to rede a dosen leevys of a book to hem, as thei schulen fynde redy the wallis of a chirche peynted or a clooth steyned or ymagis sprad abroad in dyverse placis of the chirche.'

Sir John Fortescue's (1394?—1476?) literary fame as
 Fortescue. a writer of English rests upon his 'Governance of England,' or the Difference between an Absolute and a Limited Monarchy. Sir John was a partisan of the Lancastrians, who was taken prisoner at Tewkesbury, and pardoned on condition of writing a refutation¹ of his political errors. His best-known work is in Latin, 'De Laudibus Legum Angliæ,' a dialogue between the author and the young prince Edward. In neither of these works has he any desire to assume the vulgar rôle of *laudator temporis acti*; on the contrary, he is a somewhat indiscriminate 'laudator' of his own age and country; he seems to be of opinion that he lives in the best-governed country in the world, ruled by the best of all possible systems of laws. He points his moral by repeated comparisons with France; their very robbers are far inferior to the English breed :

'It hath been oftentimes seen in England that three or four thieves for poverty have set upon six or seven true men and robbed them all. But it hath not been seen in France that six or seven thieves have been hardy to rob three or four true men. Wherefore it is right seldom that Frenchmen be hanged for robbery;

¹ Entitled 'Declaration upon Certain Writings.

for they have no hearts to do so terrible an act. There be therefore more men hanged in England in a year for robbery and manslaughter than there be hanged in France for such manner of crime in seven years. There is no man hanged in Scotland in seven years together for robbery. And yet they be oftentimes hanged for larceny and stealing of goods in the absence of the owner thereof. But their hearts serve them not to take a man's goods while he is present, and will defend it, which manner of taking is called robbery. But the Englishman is of another courage.'

'As one for example, "Morte Arthur," the whole pleasure of which book standeth in two special points, Malory. in open man-slaughter and bold bawdry.' This is the verdict of Roger Ascham, who favoured the refined pleasures of the cockpit, upon the most popular English book of the closing middle ages. Caxton printed it in 1485, 'after a copy unto to me delivered, which copy Sir Thomas Malorye did take out of certain books of French, and reduced it into English.' It closes with these words: 'this book was ended the ninth year of the reign of king Edward the Fourth by Sir Thomas Maleore, knight, as Jesu help him for his great might, as he is the servant of Jesu both day and night.' Beyond these statements we know nothing of the author. From his closing words it has been assumed that he was in holy orders; but more probably they represent only the usual pious wish of a religious mind in bringing a prolonged task to a close. The date of its completion is seen to be 1469-70, or about fifteen years before Caxton printed it.

Caxton above speaks only of French sources; Malory himself frequently uses such expressions as 'as the French book saith,' 'the French book maketh mention,' and he also has 'some English books make mention.' Dr. Oskar Sommer has shown that all the adventures and incidents of the 'Morte Darthur' are found in the mediæval Arthurian romances, French and English, prose or verse; that Malory has 'often translated literally from French, or transferred word for word from the English, yet still oftener so compressed and fused into a new shape that the finished work is but a tenth of the bulk of the original matter.'

It is hardly too much to say that Malory did for our

1130 what Chaucer had done for our poetry. When one reads the sentences quoted below, one seems to have the excellences of the prose of Dryden and Goldsmith combined in one writer.

'And therefore, lady, sithen ye have taken you to perfection, I must needs take me to perfection of right. For I take record of God. in you I have had mine earthly joy. And if I had found you now so disposed, I had cast me to have had you into mine own realm. But sithen I find you thus disposed, I insure you faithfully I will ever take me to penance, and pray while my life lasteth, if that I may find any hermit either grey or white that will receive me. Wherefore, madam, I pray you kiss me, and never no more. Nay, said the queen, that shall I never do, but abstain you from such works. And they departed. But there was never so hard an hearted man, but he would have wept to see the dolour that they made. For there was lamentation as they had been stung with spears, and many times they swooned. And the ladies bare the queen to her chamber. and Sir Launcelot awoke, and went and took his horse, and rode all that day and all that night in a forest, weeping.'

It is a strange result of the revival of learning that, with such prose as this behind them, Elyot and Ascham and the rest had to begin all over again and 'fumble about' for generations before a fit prose style at all equal to this was reached. And Malory's achievement is in other respects equally great. Excellent as his sources and models are, he need not fear comparison with them. His work is a well-co-ordinated whole, with the episodes in due subordination. He did successfully what no one had attempted before—gave us a complete Arthurian epic, the only one in our literature.

CHAPTER VII.

THE BIRTH OF ENGLISH DRAMA.

FORTUNATELY, though the story of the birth and early development of our drama is sufficiently complicated if traced in all its details, the various stages and transitions through which it passed are so clear that an outline of its early history can be given in a short chapter. In the Christian era the drama may be subdivided into religious and secular, and again into academic (or scholarly) and popular. We are concerned now almost solely with the popular religious drama, which drew its material from the popular Bible of the middle ages. There is nothing more nearly dramatic, in English literature before the Conquest, than dialogues between the soul and the body. But certainly as early as the tenth century rudimentary dramatic performances had arisen in connection with the ritual of the Church, from the desire of the clergy to bring the cardinal events of the Redeemer's life home to the understandings of their hearers; these performances passed over to England with the Normans. To this source may be traced the origin of both Miracle Plays and Moralities. The germ of the latter may be seen in the dramatisation of such a text as 'Righteousness and Peace have kissed each other.' The germ of the former¹ is seen in the responses which were introduced into the Church services at Easter and Christmas, preceded by a procession of the clergy and choristers taking part in them, and gradually enlarged by the addition of more dramatic accessories. These responses

¹ It is unnecessary to distinguish between Miracles and Mysteries. The distinction, as far as England is concerned, is a modern one; they all formerly went under the one name of Miracles.

were at first entirely in Latin. Thus, the following is the commencement of an Easter dialogue :

'*Apostoli.* Dic nobis, Maria,
Quid vidisti in via.
Prima Maria. Sepulchrum Christi viventis
Et gloriam resurgentis.'

While at Christmas it took this form :

'Quem quaeritis in praesepe, pastores?
Salvatorem Christum Dominum.'

In the nature of things further developments arose. At Rouen, in the eleventh century, we read of a crib, a baby, mother, shepherds, angels, etc.—in fact, a liturgical drama in Latin. 'First a child, from before the choir and on a raised platform, representing an angel, will announce the birth of the Saviour; . . . the shepherds must come in by the great gate of the choir. . . . As they near the crib they sing the prose *Pax in terris*. Two priests of the first rank, wearing a dalmatic, will represent the midwives and stand by the crib.' From being wholly in Latin, these plays came to be written at first partly, and then wholly, in the vernacular.

The earliest extant 'Miracles' written by an Englishman are three composed by one Hilarius, a pupil of Abelard, about the time of Stephen. They are in Latin, with refrains in Old French. For plays written entirely in the vernacular we have to wait till the following century. But long before this we read of the performance of a lost 'Miracle' on the subject of St. Katharine, which may well have taken place as early as the close of the eleventh century, and which is said to be the earliest recorded performance of the kind. It was the work of a certain Geoffrey, settled at Dūnstable, and it is very remarkable that at so early a date it was not played in the church, as we know because Geoffrey borrowed from the sacristy copes which were unfortunately burnt the same day at his house. In the latter half of the twelfth century these performances must have become common, for Fitzstephen, in his 'Life of Thomas à Becket' (about 1182), says that the dramatic spectacles of London, as compared with those of ancient Rome, were 'holier plays.'

It has been shown that the earliest religious performances arose in connection with the Church ritual and were celebrated within the church itself. In one of the three plays of Hilarius, 'St. Nicholas,' an actor stands motionless in the niche usually occupied by the saint's image, thence descends during an interval in the service and miraculously intervenes for the restoration of some stolen property that had been entrusted to the saint's care, after which the statue is restored to its place and the service proceeds. But 'no English play which has been preserved to us contains any marks of its representation by clerical actors.' The clergy had called in the aid of an ally who became so attractive and powerful that he had to be expelled. The scene of action was shifted to the outside of the church, where a stage in tiers was erected, the uppermost, level with the church doors, representing Heaven and Paradise, the second Earth, the lowest Hell, whence fiends sometimes issued and passed through the crowd of spectators. Then a further shifting of scene to some green or other open space was necessitated by the desecration of the graves in the churchyard, trampled over by the mass of spectators. Naturally the Church began to view with less favour its quondam ally, breaking through the strait gate into the broad road of religious dissipation. The ecclesiastical feeling is expressed by William of Waddington in his 'Manuel des Pechiez,' in a passage thus rendered by Robert of Bourne in his 'Handlyng Synne':—

' Hyt ys forbode hym yn the deare
 Miracles for to make or se;
 For miracles, 3yf you begynne,
 Hyt ys a gaderynt, a syght of synne.
 He may yn the Cherche, thurgh thys resun,
 Pley the resurrecyun;
 That is to seye, how god ros,
 God and man yn myght and los (praise),
 To make men be yn beleve gode,
 That he ros with flesshe and blode;
 And he may pley withoutyn plyght (danger)
 How god was bore yn thole nyght,
 To make men to beleve stedfastly
 That he lyght yn the vyrgyne Mary.
 3yf thou do hyt in weyys or grenys
 A syght of synne truly hyt semys.'

Further developments quickly followed on the release from ecclesiastical control. As early as 1233 *Cycles of Plays* the parish clerks of London had organised themselves into a harmonic guild, and the popularity of 'Miracles' led them to add acting to the entertainments which they were prepared to provide. It is possible, however, that the opposition of the Church would have led to the suppression of these plays had not the Council of Vienne in 1311 revived the feast of Corpus Christi, which had been instituted in 1264 by Urban IV. in honour of the consecrated Host. This festival, falling usually in June, was observed by the trade guilds as a public holiday; hence the favourite form of popular entertainment was soon added to the religious procession, and eclipsed it in public favour. As the number of guilds desirous of taking part in these performances increased, the Christmas and Easter scenes, which had originally been the nucleus of the whole, were expanded in both directions until a complete cycle of plays was formed, starting from the Creation and Fall of Man, embracing certain Old Testament episodes with a special bearing on the gospel narrative, tracing in detail the principal events in the Redeemer's life, and rounding off the whole with the Judgment. Four such cycles have come down to us, called respectively the York, Towneley, Chester, and Coventry plays.

The York cycle, which numbers forty-eight plays, dates from the middle of the fourteenth century. It *The York Plays* will be of interest to name some of the guilds, with the titles of the plays they had severally to enact:—
 1. *Barkers*—'The Creation. Fall of Lucifer.' 2. *Plasterers*—'The Creation to the Fifth Day.' 3. *Cardmakers*—'God creates Adam and Eve.' 4. *Fullers*—'Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden.' 5. *Coopers*—'Man's Disobedience and Fall.' 6. *Armourers*—'Adam and Eve driven from Eden.' 7. *Glovers*—'Sacrificium Cayme et Abell.' 8. *Shipwrights*—'Building of the Ark.' 9. *Fishers and Mariners*—'Noah and the Flood.' 10. *Parchmyners' and Bookbinders*—'Abraham's Sacrifice.' 11. *Hosiers*—'The Israelites in Egypt, the Ten Plagues, and Passage of the Red Sea.' 12. *Spicers*—'Annunciation and visit of Elizabeth to Mary.' And so on.

From about the same period dates the cycle of Wakefield
 The Towneley or Towneley plays, so called from the manu-
 Plays. script having long been in the possession of the
 Towneley family. They are only thirty-two in number,
 and five of them are almost identical with five in the York
 cycle. Their distinguishing feature is the prominence given
 to the comic and realistic element, which is one of the
 modes, as we shall see, in which further dramatic develop-
 ment was possible. For example, the scene of the visit of
 the shepherds to Bethlehem is preceded by a farcical
 episode, wherein a certain Mak steals a sheep and passes it
 off as a baby to which his wife Gyll has lately given birth.
 'The shepherds search the house, Gyll upbraiding them and
 keeping them away from the cradle. They find nothing
 and take their leave, rather ashamedly. As they go a
 thought strikes one of them:' they had given nothing to
 the child. The fraud is thus discovered, but in the midst of
 the scene that ensues, in which Mak and his wife still
 insist that the sheep is their child, an angel appears singing
 'Gloria in excelsis,' and attention is diverted from Mak's
 baby.

The Chester plays,¹ only twenty-five in number, were
 acted at Whitsuntide instead of Corpus Christi.
 Other Cycles. Their chief characteristic is that in them, more
 than in the other cycles, 'a real effort was made to serve
 the religious object to which all Miracle plays were os-
 tensibly directed.' In the so-called Coventry cycle, which
 consists of forty-two plays, performed (as appears from the
 prologue) by a company of strolling players, and which is
 only connected with Coventry by a doubtful tradition, 'the
 didactic speeches elsewhere assigned to a "Doctor" or
 "Expositor" are delivered by an allegorical personage
 called Contemplacio. Death is personified, and a play on
 the Salutation is prefaced by a long prologue in heaven, in
 which the speakers are (besides Deus Pater and Deus Filius)
 Veritas, Misericordia, Justitia, and Pax. This tendency
 towards the personification of abstract ideas is a mark of
 late date in the history of the Miracle play, and helps to
 link this cycle to the earlier Moralities.'²

¹ See p. 104.

² Pollard's 'English Miracle Plays,' p. xxxix.

These cycles continued to be played till the close of the sixteenth century. The last performance of the York plays was in 1579. Archdeacon Rogers saw the Chester plays performed in 1594, and has left an account of the method of representation which (notwithstanding the ambiguity in his use of the word ‘pageant’) brings the whole scene before us vividly enough. ‘Every company had his pageant, or part, which pageants were a high scaffold with two rooms, a higher and a lower, upon four wheels. In the lower they appareled themselves, and in the higher room they played, being all open on the top, that all beholders might hear and see them. The places where they played them was in every street. They began first at the Abbey gates, and when the first pageant was played it was wheeled to the High Cross before the mayor, and so to every street; and so every street had a pageant playing before them at one time, till all the pageants for the day appointed were played: and when one pageant was near ended, word was brought from street to street, that so they might come in place thereof exceeding orderly, and all the streets have their pageants afore them all at one time playing together; to see which plays was great resort, and also scaffolds and stages made in the streets in those places where they determined to play their pageants.’

It is a far cry from the ‘Miracles’ to the Shakespearian drama, yet he would be blind indeed who should fail to see the indebtedness of the latter to its crude forerunners. ‘Confined within strict limits,’ says Courthope, ‘by their religious origin and symbolical purpose, they nevertheless prepared the way for a larger dramatic development; in the first place, by spreading a taste for theatrical exhibitions among the people; in the second place, by furnishing opportunities, in many of the Scriptural scenes, for the direct imitation of human nature; and in the third place, by importing into the representations foreign materials and characters, which led to the invention of plots beyond the range of Scripture history.’ ‘These early dramatists, too, furnished the hints for all the nameless generic characters, which figure so

‘Miracles’ and
the Later
Drama.

prominently in Shakespeare's plays. His First and Second Citizens, Carriers, Gentlemen, and Soldiers have all of them prototypes in the pageants of the craftsmen; and from the familiar talk by which the actors helped the townsfolk to realise the Scripture narrative was generalised the style made classical in the mouths of Bottom, Dogberry, and Falstaff.' Nor is this all. The pathetic situations of the 'Miracles' in the scene between Abraham and Isaac and in the story of Christ; the grotesquely comic element in the character of Lucifer, developing later into the clown; the melodramatic character of the bombastic Herod; the pastoral element in the scene of the annunciation to the shepherds: none of these can have failed to influence the later history of the drama.

'The Morality Play does not represent a transition from the miracle-play to the true drama,' says Henry 'Moralities.' Morley. It would be equally true to say that the chrysalis does not represent a transition from the grub to the butterfly. We have seen the introduction of allegorical characters, under the influence of the prevailing fashion, into the Coventry 'Miracles.' The next step was the creation of a class of plays (or better *works*) in which allegorical abstractions have the field all to themselves. The earliest of these are the 'Pride of Life' and the 'Castle of Perseverance,' both belonging to the fifteenth century. The latter traces the history of Humanus Genus from birth to the Day of Judgment. In general interest and dramatic power they fall far below the 'Miracles.' But whereas the latter were confined within a groove by the Scripture narrative and an unelastic body of dogma, the writers of 'Moralities' were compelled to *invent a plot*, and to compensate for the uninteresting nature of their *dramatis personae* by ingenuity of construction. Their very weakness proved a source of dramatic strength. Every adventitious aid possible was called in to overcome the tedium inseparable from the antics of allegorical lay figures dramatised into some semblance of life. Scene-painting received more attention and dramatic 'properties' were freely introduced. Instead of the old rigid series of somewhat disconnected pageants, the incidents of the play told

into the career of a central allegorical personage or hero, and thus a distinct advance was made towards unity of construction. Moreover, in the attempt strongly to individualise the allegorical characters, with a view to arousing greater interest in them, the playwrights were led to depict real characters with moral nicknames. Finally, by the gradual substitution for virtues and vices of actual historical or contemporaneous people, who were good illustrations of particular virtues and vices, there came to be produced some old plays, tragedies, histories, and comedies, still unaffected by imitation of classical models, from which the allegorical personages had been nearly excluded. Thus we see that the 'Morality' proved a way of escape for the infant drama from the necessary limitations of the 'Miracle.'

It is not to be wondered at that our early literature ^{Allusions to} abounds with allusions to these crude popular 'Miracles,' etc. dramas. Absolon, in the 'Miller's Tale,' himself a parish clerk,

'Somtyme, to shewe his lightnesse and maistrye,
He playeth Herodes on a scaffold hye.'

Shakespeare has several references to them, as when Hamlet, in his address to the players, speaks of 'o'erdoing Termagant' (an imaginary god of the Mahometans, and a violent character in some of the old plays) and 'out-heroding Herod.' And again in 'Henry V.' he mentions 'this roaring devil i' the old play, that every one may pare his nails with a wooden dagger.' The devil was a stock character in the 'Miracles,' and was borrowed from them for the 'Moralties,' in which latter he had, as an attendant, Vice,¹ the established buffoon, and in some ways the most important character.

As an illustration of the works dealt with in this chapter, we have selected the following characteristic passage from the ninth play in the York Mysteries: '*The Fishers and Mariners*—Noah and his wife, the Flood and its waning.'

¹ See 'Richard III.,' III. i. 82.

SCENE II.—*Noah's home, 1st son enters.*

- 1 *fil.* Where are ye, modir myne?
Come to my fadir sone.
- Uxor.* What sais thou? sone?
- 1 *fil.* Moder, certeyne
My ffadir thynkis to flitte full ferre.
He biddis you haste with al youre mayne
Unto hym, that no thyng you marre.
- Uxor.* 3a! good sone, hy the faste agayne,
And telle hym I wol come no narre (nearer).
- 1 *filius.* Dame, I wolde do youre biddyng fayne,
But yow bus (behoves) wende, els bese it warre (worse).
- Uxor.* Werre! that wolde I witte.
We bowrde (jest) al wrange, I wene.
- 1 *filius.* Modir, I saie you yitte,
My ffadir is bowne (ready) to flitte.
- Uxor.* Now, certis, I sall nouȝt sitte,
Or (ere) I se what he mene.

SCENE III.—*The Ark, as before.*

- 1 *filius.* Fadir, I have done nowe as ye comaunde,
My modir comes to you this daye.
- Noe.* Scho is welcome, I wele warrande,
This worlde sall sone be waste awaye. [*Wife comes in*]
- Uxor.* Wher arte thou Noye?
- Noe.* Loo! here at hande,
Come hedir faste, dame, I the praye.
- Uxor.* Trowes thou that I wol leve the harde lande,
And tourne up here on toure deraye (confusion)?
Nay, Noye, I am nouȝt bowne
to fonde (go) nowe over there ffellis (these hills);
Doo barnes, goo we and trusse (make ready) to towne.
- Noe.* Nay, certis, sothly than mon (must) ye drowne.
- Uxor.* In faythe thou were als goode come downe,
And go do som what ellis.
- Noe.* Dame, fowrty dayes are nerhand past
And gone sen it be-gan to rayne;
On lyffe salle noman lenger laste
Bot we allane, is nought to layne (conceal).
- Uxor.* Now Noye, in faythe the founes (growest silly) full faste,
This fare (proceeding) wille I no lenger frayne (inquire
into),
Thou arte nere woode (mad), I am agaste,
Fare-wele, I wille go home agayne.
- Noe.* O! woman, arte thou woode?
Of my weikis thou not wolte,
All that has ban (bone) or bloode
Salle be overe flowed with the floode. [*Detains her.*]

- Uxor.* In faith, the were als goode
to late me go my gatte (way).
We owte! herrowe!
- Noc.* What now! What cheere?
- Uxor.* I wille no narre for no kynnes (kind of) nede.
- Noc.* Helpe! my sonnes to holde her here,
For tille (to) her harmes she takes no heede.
- 2 filius.* Beis mery, modir, and mende youre chere,
This worlde beis drowned with-outen drede.
- Uxor.* Allas! that I this lare shuld lere.
- Noc.* Thou spilles us alle, ille myght thou speede!
- 3 filius.* Dere modir, wonne (remain) with us,
ther shal no-thing you greve.
- Uxor.* Nay, nedlyngis (needs) home me bus,
For I have tolis (tools) to trusse.
- Noc.* Woman, why dois thou thus,
To make us more myscheve?
- Uxor.* Noyc, thou myght have leteyn (let) me wete (know),
Erlly and late thou wente ther outte,
And ay at home thou lete me sytte,
To loke that nowhere were wele aboutte.
- Noc.* Dame, thou holde me excused of itt,
It was goddis wille with-owten doutte.
- Uxor.* What? wenys thou so for to go qwitte?
- Noc.* Nay, be my trouthe, thou getis a clowte. [*Strikes him.*]
I pray the, dame, be stille.
- Uxor.* Thus god wolde have it wrought.
Thow shulde have witte my wille,
Yf I wolde sente ther tille (assent thereto),
And Noyc, for that same skylle (reason),
this bargan (strife) sall be bought.
Nowe at firste I fynde and feele
Wher thou hast to the forest soght,
Thou shuld have tolde me for oure seele (happiness)
Whan we were to slyke bargane brought.'

CHAPTER VIII.

SURVEY OF THE YEARS 1500 TO 1579 A.D.

BEFORE dealing separately with the poetry, the prose, and the drama that preceded and led up to the golden age of Shakespeare, it may be useful to take a general survey of the literature of the sixteenth century as far as the middle of Elizabeth's reign. Our last halting-place was the middle of the fourteenth century; the changes that have taken place in the meantime, in many phases of the national life, are stupendous. There is no general agreement as to the point where *medieval* passes into *modern*; even Chaucer is medieval to some and modern to others. But at the very latest in the first half of the sixteenth century we leave the middle ages behind and enter upon the modern period. By the year 1500 all the influences that moulded and fashioned the magnificent epoch with which the century closed, were playing upon our literature, although some of them are faint and almost indistinguishable. Printing is in its vigorous youth; the Renaissance is beating upon our shores and threatening for a time to overwhelm us with a flood of indiscriminate classicism; Englishmen have already been travelling to Italy for the sake of the new learning, and will soon bring home thence the influence of a modern literature that is to compete with that of the ancient classics themselves. Translations from the classics have already begun to be made; together with translations from modern languages they will increase in number with the passing years of the century. The Bible will soon require to be translated anew, and the right men will be found to do it. The Reformation is imminent.¹ Momentous social and political changes

¹ Savonarola was hanged and burnt in 1498.

have been taking place with the growth of the power of the people, especially of the middle and merchant classes. A stirring spirit of adventure, discovery, and invention is abroad; the names of Columbus, Cabot, and Vasco de Gamo are all associated with the last decade of the fifteenth century.

In language Hawes is more modern than Chaucer; in subject, spirit, and treatment Chaucer is more 1500—1579 A.D. modern than Hawes. In these latter regards it may plausibly be maintained that the first half of the sixteenth century links medieval to modern English literature, for we enter it with Hawes and we quit it with Surrey, spending much of the time on our way with More. These three names are here mentioned as seeming to be typical of the bulk of the writings of this age: Hawes is taken as the poet who stands on the hithermost verge of the middle ages, and is scarcely affected by the striving for a wider and higher culture which characterises his younger contemporaries; More is the central figure of the New Learning before the Reformation and of the fierce controversial literature engendered by the politico-religious strife of Henry VIII.'s reign; Wyatt and Surrey give us the poetic first-fruits of the Renaissance. The date chosen for the later limit of the period dealt with in this chapter is that of the publication of Spenser's 'Shepherd's Calendar'; for this, as we look back, seems to be the first unmistakable announcement of the fact that that glorious age in our literature which we term 'Elizabethan' has begun. In these earlier years of Elizabeth's reign we are, as in the previous half-century, still in a time of training, a time of preparation rather than one of great performance; but the careful preparatory exercises are now approaching more nearly the standard of fine composition, and the years of diligent training are making it possible for the next generation to enter upon an inheritance of literary culture which their fathers and grandfathers had toiled assiduously and painfully to amass.

In order to make our outlook from the year 1500 A.D. as A Glance comprehensive and useful as possible, it is
Backward. necessary to take a rapid glance over the fifteenth century from our present standpoint. Since

England first began to have a literature, down to the present day, there has hardly been a century more barren of work of literary merit than that which lies between Chaucer and Langland at the one extreme, and the spread of printing and the dawn of a revived interest in letters at the other. The Wars of the Roses have often been held too largely responsible for this result. 'Instead of being absorbed in the contemplation of these dreadful struggles,' says a recent writer, 'holding its breath at the sight of the slaughter, the nation paid very little attention to them, and regarded these doings in the light of *res inter alios acta*.'¹ That no genius of a high kind appears in England during the whole century is a fact which can only be accepted and not explained. Similarly, we cannot hope fully to understand why in the latter half of Queen Elizabeth's reign we have a whole company of men to each of whom we can without exaggeration give the name of genius, though we can trace during the preceding age influences and events which, if they were not necessary to produce the later Elizabethan literature, were at least instrumental in determining the form which it should take. 'Poetry, above all,' says Carlyle, 'we should have known long ago, is one of those mysterious things whose origin and developments can never be what we call explained; often it seems to us like the wind, blowing where it lists, coming and departing with little or no regard to any the most cunning theory that has yet been devised for it.' But even if this be so, it may be well to remind the student that the shape and condition of the instrument, the way in which it is strung, and its mechanical efficiency, will have a good deal to do with the music it yields when swept by the wind. The mechanical condition of the instruments, if we may be permitted to continue the metaphor, was poor in the middle part of the fifteenth century, the result, not of inferior models, but of careless workmanship, feeble taste, the restricted demand for literary ware, and, above all, of the immense and (at the time) ill-understood changes

¹ 'In the course of an examination bearing on thousands of documents, Thorold Rogers found but two allusions to the civil wars. The duration of these wars must not, besides, be exaggerated; by adding one period of hostilities to another it will be found they lasted three years in all.'—JUSSERAND.

that were taking place both in the language and in the social and political conditions of the nation; so that even a great artist, had there been one then, might have been much hampered thereby. But towards the end of the next century the instruments were in a high state of perfection, the result of fine models, competent workmanship, improving taste, more knowledge, and a large demand for finished work, so that even performers of only moderate talent were able to produce very pretty music. Some of the influences which tended to produce this better state of things it is our chief concern in this chapter to inquire into.

We have seen that the Chaucerian tradition passed into
 The Scotch Poets. Scotland with James I. (died 1437). There,

after lying dormant for a while, it produced, about the close of the century, a group of poets who were not unworthy of the master. There was sufficient interval between James I. and Henryson, the first of the group, to justify us in taking the latter out of his century and placing him, with Dunbar, Douglas, and Lyndesay, in the next chapter. Dunbar¹ and Douglas (the works of whom fall entirely after 1500 A.D.) dispute with Sackville the claim to be the greatest poet between Chaucer and Spenser. With them the direct Chaucerian succession in Scotland may be said to end; but, nevertheless, Chaucer's influence is strong over much of the work of Lyndesay, who, though by no means a poet of a high order, is interesting as a man whose writings powerfully reflect the varied movements of his lifetime.

Of prose during the fifteenth century nothing more need
 Prose. be said here, because that age produced none which had a marked influence on the literature of the period we are now dealing with. Professor Ker, it is true, takes a different view. 'In literature, as a general rule,' he says, 'progress was made in a direct and continuous line, by taking up what was old and carrying it on. This at least was the method of Ariosto and Spenser, of Shakespeare and Cervantes, and their predecessors in this

¹ "On the whole the most considerable poet of our island in the interval between Chaucer and Spenser."—NICHOL. But Courthope considers Douglas 'on the whole a more important figure for the historian of poetry.'

were Chaucer and Malory. It is impossible to draw any dividing line. There was no Protestant schism in literature. One cannot separate the "Morte D'Arthur" from the old romances on the one hand, nor from the Elizabethans on the other. Malory is succeeded by Lord Berners with his "Froissart" and his "Huon of Bordeaux," and Lord Berners is a link with Thomas North, "Euphues," and Sir Philip Sidney. Innumerable classical and foreign influences went to make the new world, but among them all the old currents from the old well-springs kept on flowing. This argument suffers from being overstated: the one prose writer mentioned between 1470 (Malory) and 1579 (North and 'Euphues') is Lord Berners, who was a translator purely and simply, and who is not typical of his age. Classical influence tended to swamp original English prose between 1500 and 1579, as may be seen in the works of such men as Sir Thomas Elyot and Ascham, to whom great honour is due for writing in English at all, although they do little more than just keep above the classical tide by hobbling along on English stilts. That tide had to be driven back into its proper channel before such prose as Hooker's and Bacon's was possible.

Three events towards the close of the comparatively sterile fifteenth century give us pause for a moment or two. In 1476 Caxton set up a printing-press at Westminster; in 1491 Grocyen began to teach Greek at Oxford; in 1492 Columbus brought to Europe the tidings of a new world. A new world it was, in fact, that each of these pioneers brought us in contact with. On the work of the sailor there is no need to dwell long here; the discoveries of new lands and the hope of discoveries yet to be made turned the thoughts of men to larger views of the physical universe, and brought into English life and letters that spirit of adventure that begins to stir with the beginning of the sixteenth century, and breathes through many of the best (and not only the best) works of 'the spacious times of great Elizabeth.'

The printer's craft was opportunely introduced at such a time as to be ready when literature and learning could best profit by it. Caxton had learnt and exercised his craft in Bruges, where he had long

dwelt. It was in Bruges that he produced his first two books, the 'Recuyell of the Histories of Troy,' of which he said, 'I have learned to ordain this book in print at my great charge and expenso'; and the 'Game and Play of the Chess,' which 'I did do set in imprint.' The 'Recuyell' was the first of many romances and tales of chivalry and adventure, such as the 'Morte Darthur' and 'Godfrey of Boulogne,' with which he provided the English public. Other typical productions of the early press are didactic works like Lord Rivers's 'Dicts and Sayings of the Philosophers' (a translation), medieval stories of the saints such as the 'Golden Legend,' and the popular tale (translated from the Dutch) of 'Reynard the Fox.' So far, it was largely a literature of translation and compilation, and is important as having stimulated a considerable amount of literary activity and as having been instrumental in helping to substitute English for Latin as a prose medium; for the printing-press, appealing to a wider public than the scribe had done, looked at once for its chief support (as it has done ever since) to the semi-educated—to those who had little more learning than enabled them to read the vernacular. Another large class of publications which issued from Caxton's press consisted of editions of the older poets, of Chaucer, of Gower, and of Lydgate, and of old chronicles; and these, too, stimulated literary composition. Lydgate especially was closely imitated, notably by Stephen Hawes in Henry VII.'s reign, and by the projectors of the 'Mirror for Magistrates' in Mary's. The chronicles Caxton printed were enlarged and continued by Elizabethan compilers, and largely drawn on for material by Elizabethan playwrights and poets. Yet the days of medieval poetry and prose were numbered, and it is curious that the man who first employed the means which have since been so powerful in the spread and development of modern literature should have been destined to use them merely for the last days of the old order.

This old order was slowly yielding place to the new, helped to its end by the new models of style and the new subjects that the classical scholars were holding up to admiration. Even more important

perhaps than the adventurer and the printer in connection with the early seed-time of the English Renaissance is the scholar. Let us for a moment watch his proceedings under the early Tudors. Grocyn had learned his Greek at Florence, the home of classical culture in the fifteenth century, when lettered Greeks, wandering from their decaying fatherland, found its literature fitly cherished at the court of the Medici, and of many another Italian prince. The taking of Constantinople by the Turks (1453) drove forth fresh bands of Greeks to their brothers in exile in Italy. That country had produced no fine native literature in the fifteenth century, belying, like England, the magnificent promise of the fourteenth; but in learning and culture it was far in advance of us. When Grocyn returned to England, he found a few Englishmen ready to learn from him, and a few more who, imitating his example, sought culture in Italy itself; so that before the end of the fifteenth century the intellect of a young man such as More might possibly nourish itself on Greek philosophy and Greek poetry, instead of starving on the arid productions of the Schoolmen, or the watery effusions of the imitators of Lydgate, as must have been the case a decade or two earlier. The influence of the small knot of English scholars, whom we find in the early part of the sixteenth century, is of far more importance than the direct instruction they gave, for the higher standards of style and form they spread abroad would, of course, affect many a man who knew 'little Latin and less Greek.' The spread of the New Learning in Henry VII.'s reign may not have been very rapid, but the enthusiasm among those who pursued it was deep. Erasmus, who first visited England in 1497, speaks in terms of high admiration of Oxford, and declares that there, such was the state of 'erudition, not of a vulgar and ordinary kind, but recondite, accurate, ancient, both Latin and Greek, that you would not seek anything in Italy but the pleasure of travelling.' No doubt, as Hallam points out, the praise is exaggerated (the letter is addressed to an Englishman), but the great scholar's appreciation of the ardour for study he found in this country is evident, and he himself was induced to come to teach

at Cambridge in 1510. The actual number of classical scholars increases steadily throughout the reign of Henry VIII.—a young and cultured king, from whom learning might hope much—and we get some idea of the zeal among the noble and the wealthy for the New Learning from the number of schools and colleges founded during Henry VIII.'s and Edward VI.'s reigns; but the best proofs of its influence are to be found in the books of the age.¹

It seemed at one time as if the fierce political and social upheaval which brought about and accompanied the Reformation would sweep away the freshly awakened love of letters; but happily this was not the case. On the contrary, the immense stimulus given to the intellectual activity of England by the revival of the study of the classics and by renewed contact with Italy, as well as by the knowledge spread abroad of the discoveries of new worlds, was aided rather than hindered by the keen struggles of the Reformation. The scholar, it is true, would still write his book for the European cultured public in Latin (e.g., More's 'Utopia'); but he would not disdain to use English if he wished to address a large English audience, as we see in the mass of the Reformation literature (exemplified in More and Tyndale's controversy); moreover,

¹ 'We have the imposing testimony of Erasmus that neither France nor Germany stood so high about this period (1520-30) as England. That country, he says, so distant from Italy, stands next to it in the esteem of the learned. (About 1520) we can produce a not very small number of persons possessing a competent acquaintance with Greek. . . . Such were Grocyn, the patriarch of English learning, who died in 1519; Linacre, whose translation of Galen, first printed in 1521, is one of the few in that age that escape censure for inelegance or incorrectness; [William] Latimer, beloved and admired by his friends, but of whom we have no memorial in any writings of his own; More, known as a Greek scholar by epigrams of some merit; Lilly, master of St. Paul's School, who had acquired Greek at Rhodes, but whose reputation is better preserved by the [Latin] Grammar that bears his name [in which, however, he was assisted by Erasmus and Colet]; Lupton, who is said to have learned from Lilly, and who taught some time at Oxford; Richard Croke [a pupil of Grocyn, who taught Greek from 1514-18 at Leipzig, and subsequently at Cambridge]; Gerald Lister, a physician, to whom Erasmus gives credit for skill in three languages; Pace and Tunstall, both men well known in the history of those times; Lee and Stokesley, afterwards bishops, the former of whom published Annotations on the Greek Testament of Erasmus in 1520; and Gardiner, Tyndale, . . . and a few more' (Hallam). [The words in square brackets are condensations or additions.] Two other scholars of Henry VIII.'s reign may be mentioned here, viz., Thomas Smith (afterwards knighted, when secretary of state to Elizabeth), who became Greek lecturer at Cambridge in 1533, and introduced a new style of pronunciation; and John Cheke (afterwards knighted), who succeeded Smith, and was the first Regius Professor of Greek (1540). Ascham was one of his most distinguished pupils.

before the close of Henry VIII.'s reign we find a scholar-like Ascham, following Elyot's example, bold enough to write his 'Toxophilus' in his own tongue (though it is true he apologises for so doing).

The Reformation comes into contact with English literature in the controversies that it aroused and in the translation of the Bible. Some of the older scholars and friends of letters, such as More and Fisher, were staunch adherents of the old order, but in the hands of others, and especially the younger ones, the New Learning was a powerful weapon to use against Romanism. A vast quantity of vigorous prose and verse is connected more or less directly with the reform of abuses in the Church; thus Skelton's fierce invective in his own peculiar metre is directed against Wolsey as the all-powerful court-cardinal, but in no way against the Church, of which the satirist is himself a priest; while Roy, on the other hand—quondam Franciscan friar, and co-worker with Tyndale in his English version of the Bible—attacks both cardinal and Church with a vigour and scurrility fully equal to Skelton's, though without a tithe of the latter's ability. More, who succeeded Wolsey in the chancellorship and the hatred of the reformers, is the ablest of the few scholarly writers in English who uphold the old Church against Tyndale and the reformers, whilst, on the other side, Hugh Latimer's oratory is as remarkable for its form as its matter; to him must be given the credit of having produced some of the most masculine prose that is to be found in our language before the latter half of Elizabeth's reign. On the whole, perhaps, but always with the remarkable exception of Tyndale and Coverdale's translation of the Bible (see p. 177), the actual literary value of the bulk of the writing connected with the Reformation is but slight; the services, however, rendered by it to English literature are considerable, for it forced the author, however scholarly, who wished to appeal to a native audience, to write in English instead of Latin, and thus the first attempts on any considerable scale at writing English prose belong to this time; we shall not, therefore, look for polished literary form or great stylistic achievements in the prose works

of the period. We must remember that they are mostly 'introductory exercises,' that the writers used a language which afforded few models which they could safely imitate and that as yet they were unaware of the grandeur of the language for prose purposes. With few exceptions, the prose writers of the first three quarters of this century either write as if with difficulty in a strange tongue, or else pay little or no attention to the language they use though the best of them endeavour (and often manage) to express themselves with great clearness. But for the part that rhythm and cadence play in the structure of sentences and the expression of thought we shall generally look in vain—the one notable exception being again the Bible. There is no escaping from the wonder which the grand English of Tyndale and Coverdale's translation of the Bible arouses, especially when it is compared with contemporary prose; the value of their labours from the purely literary standpoint it would be difficult to over-estimate, and it must never be forgotten how much the translators of 1611 owed to their version.

Here perhaps is the place for a final word or two on changes in the English language.¹ 'The introduction of printing,' says Skeat, 'did very much to fix the language, and the result has been that the language of the fifteenth century differs less from that of the nineteenth than the language of the fourteenth from that of the thirteenth.' One way in which it is easy to illustrate this is to observe that, while modernising the spelling utterly ruins the metre of Chaucer by depriving it of many flecional syllables (especially those which end in *e*), the modernising of the spelling of Hawes or Surrey makes no difference to the metre, though here and there it will spoil a rime, for the *pronunciation* of the vowels in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries differs considerably from that now in use. It must be remembered, moreover, in the case of many words we have indulged in the tendency to throw the accent further back, so that, for example, many words which scan with us as trochees we

¹ The student is referred, alike for fuller details and for later changes, to Abbott's 'Shakespearian Grammar' and text-books dealing with the history of the language.

shall find in the writers of this age as iambs. The student will observe also that, while Caxton had continued the enlargement of our vocabulary chiefly from French sources, the borrowing of new words directly from Latin and Greek is coincident with the rise and progress of the revival of learning.

The New Learning and the Reformation seem to form a
Early Poetry of sort of barrier in England between medieval
the Renaissance. and modern literature; the verse of Wyatt and Surrey (written in the latter part of Henry VIII.'s reign, but not published till the year before Elizabeth's accession) stands clearly at the head of the new poetry. The form especially of these is more remarkable than the matter: to Italy they went for their models, and they implanted on English soil the sonnet and the blank verse line, besides some more exotic metres which have hardly become naturalised; hence the work of these two poets marks the beginning of what is sometimes called the Second¹ Italian Influence. The delicacy of versification, the correctness of metre, which had distinguished Chaucer, had been practically unknown in England since his time, till this 'New Company of Courtly Makers,' as Puttenham in his 'Art of Poesy' called them, learned it again from the same land, where Chaucer himself had learned something. The writers in the earlier half of Elizabeth's reign went on with the lessons that the Italians were teaching, and rendered good service to the technical perfecting of versification. One poet, however, who belongs to the old rather than to the new school, appears in the first years of Elizabeth's reign, and is, indeed, the only poet of genius we have south of the Tweed between Chaucer and Spenser. This is Sackville, the writer of the 'Complaint of Buckingham,' and the 'Induction' to it, in the 'Mirror for Magistrates'; but his work, splendid as it is, is of less importance in the history of the development of form than many of the experiments produced by minor writers, who, dissatisfied with the old and well-read in the new, were trying their hands at imitation, translation, and adaptation. Gascoigne, a

¹ The label 'Period of the First Italian Influence' is sometimes affixed to the latter part of the fourteenth century.

man whose works are not without literary merits of their own, occupies an interesting place in literary history as one of the practisers and pioneers of new forms. With Gascoigne—satirist, lyricist, translator, playwright, essayist—we may conveniently group the works of the many—minor poets and translators whose abundant activity bears testimony to the strength and width of the Renaissance in Elizabethan England; in the ‘Miscellanies’ we have the direct influence of the ‘Courtly Makers,’ and some of the first notes of the Elizabethan song-writers; Jasper Heywood and Phaer may serve as examples of our earlier translators, the one rhyming Seneca in English, the other giving us the ‘Æneid’; and as ‘eclogue’ makers we have Turberville and Googe, before we come to the ‘Æglogues’ of the ‘Shepherd’s Calendar,’ which is itself, we may do well to bear in mind, a collection of poems largely of the experimental and imitative character.

Sackville and Gascoigne have claims on our attention, not only as poets, but also as dramatists. The former gave us the first regular tragedy in our language, while to the latter we are indebted for what is probably our first prose comedy; these are both on foreign models (Sackville’s is formed upon Seneca, Gascoigne’s is a translation from Ariosto), but, as we shall see, are by no means the less important for that. The distinction of having written the first regular English play belongs to Nicholas Udall, whose rhymed comedy, ‘Ralph Roister Doister,’ was produced between 1534 and 1541. A few general remarks may be useful here on the growth of the drama from the end of the fifteenth century to the years immediately preceding those when Peole and Greene and Lyly and Marlowe were preparing the way for Shakespeare.

As we have seen, the earliest kinds of dramatic representation in England were what are known as ‘Miracle plays’ and ‘Mystery plays,’ which dealt with legends and histories of the saints, or represented scenes and actions from the Bible. They seem to have originated with the clergy, and to have been at first acted within the walls of the monastery; they became so popular, however, that they soon passed into the hands of the laity, but the writing

of them remained for the most part, if not entirely, in the hands of clerics; they came to be acted by the guilds of certain towns, and they survived in England as late as the end of the sixteenth century.

It is unnecessary, in studying the history of the drama, in the sixteenth century, to pay much further attention to the Miracles and Mysteries, which, as we shall see, are not the sole progenitors of the Elizabethan drama, and are themselves, as a rule, not of great literary value; but this much of importance at least attaches to them—they popularised the desire for dramatic representation, and (especially by the intermingling of the comic element with the tragic) prepared the way for the reception of the first English popular plays on subjects not connected with the Church. But even more important in this respect are the Morality plays, which first appear in the fifteenth century, and which, gradually changing their character, tend to pass into the didactic interlude and other dramatic compositions, rather than to die a natural death. At first nothing more than acted allegories, connected with the 'Miracles' chiefly by their moral purpose and general design, they rapidly developed, in the sixteenth century, individuality, not to say personality, of characterisation and realism of dialogue, and, during the Reformation struggles, they were used for theological and political ends, although still keeping the idea of teaching in the forefront.

We now reach the Interlude, which has a resemblance in some respects to the Morality, but differs from it in dealing with secular and comic subjects and in developing a dialogue which entitles it to be called, at least in that respect, a rudimentary comedy. These Interludes were acted by household servants and retainers, and are important as developing the custom of a nobleman of wealth having a band of more or less well-trained actors dependent on him. In the latter part of Elizabeth's reign, after the drama proper was full-grown, we shall find specific theatrical companies calling themselves the 'Earl of Leicester's servants,' 'the Queen's players,' and so on.

A few words about the Masque will conclude this account of the elements of the popular drama. The Masque seems

to have been in its origin merely a spectacle or bit of a pageant, with a certain amount of pantomime added thereto; dancing and concerted movements brought it into something like the modern ballet, and then the addition of songs and dialogue gave it sometimes a dramatic-operatic character.¹

We are now in a position to consider to some extent the rise of the English drama, for none of the classes of plays hitherto considered have a higher rank than that of our drama's forerunners. We might roughly classify the early Elizabethan drama under three headings—viz., (α) the popular drama, (β) the Latin, and (γ) the Italian. In many (if not in all) of the works of the later Elizabethans we shall find all these elements blended, as we shall to a less extent in some of the earlier ones; here, however, we may consider them separately.

(α) The popular drama continues the varieties already enumerated—viz., the Mystery and the Miracle, acted down to the very close of our period, the Morality and the Interlude; and develops from the two latter the rough farce and the chronicle play, partaking of the nature of them both. The later Elizabethan drama owes much to it, notably not a little of the form of the history-play and of the clownage and humorous foolery of the comedy.

(β) The Latin drama, during the early period we deal with here, may conveniently be studied in connection with Udall and with Sackville. In tragedy the model is Seneca;² in comedy, Plautus and Terence. Plautus and Terence

¹ These remarks apply only to the drama as far as the date (1570) to which this chapter extends. A few years later we shall find Shakespeare's 'Midsummer Night's Dream,' a beautiful example of the lyric drama, having many points of resemblance with the poetical masque, while later on, in 'Henry VIII.' and 'The Tempest,' masques of different kinds are introduced. The poetical masques in the first part of the seventeenth century, such as those of Ben Jonson and Milton, do not concern us here.

² The following remarks on the plays of Seneca the tragedian (who is generally identified with Seneca the philosopher, A.D. 3—65) may be useful to the student:

"There are eight complete tragedies and one praetexta, the "Octavia," which is generally supposed to be by a later hand, as well as considerable fragments from the "Thaïs" and "Phoenissæ." The subjects are all from the well-worn repository of Greek legend, and are mostly drawn from Euripides. The titles of "Medea," "Hercules Furens," "Hippolytus," and "Troades," at once proclaim their origin; but the "Hercules Oeteus," "Oedipus Thyestes," and "Agamemnon," are probably based on a comparison of the treatment by the several Attic masters. The tragedies of Seneca have, as a rule, been strongly censured for their rhetorical colouring, their false passion, and their total want of dramatic interest. They are to the Greek plays as daylight to sunlight. But [we have to remember that] . . . to them [the Romans] the form was what constituted a work poetical, not the creative idea that

had been used before to supply suggestions for the farcical or pseudo-humorous elements of the older plays; in Udall's play, however, we find a comedy, thoroughly English in plot, incident, tone, and dialogue, but based on classic comic models as regards its construction.

(γ) The Italian drama, as far as it concerns us here, finds its representative as regards tragedy in such a work as Gascoigne's 'Jocasta,' or Whetstone's 'Promos and Cassandra,' and as regards comedy, in Gascoigne's 'Supposes.' We need not here dwell long on this section: but let us point out that it is perhaps the most important factor of the great Elizabethan stage, and that it itself was derived from the Latin drama.

To conclude this sketch of the early drama: the student will bear in mind the facts (α) that no masterpiece of what is known as the 'Elizabethan drama' appeared till some years after the close of the period with which this chapter deals, and (β) that before any such masterpiece appeared the three streams of popular, classical, and Italian play-writing had melted into one, and that though in some fine plays we can trace the influence of one as being much more powerful than either of the two others, yet there is no Elizabethan play of the highest merit as a work of art to the making of which all three did not to some extent contribute. It is, perhaps, conceivable that had there been a Shakespeare born, say, in the middle of the fifteenth century, his genius might have found a way to express itself fitly in the form that it found made, or that it could have made for itself out of such material as lay at its disposal; but as a matter of fact we know we have to take into account that Shakespeare arose and gradually developed after Marlowe and Greene and Peele, and that we have no Marlowe and Greene and Peele till after the years of training and experiment which we have been considering: this, and this alone, would be enough to justify the student in devoting much time and thought to those years.

underlay it. To utilise fictitious situations as a vehicle for individual conviction or lofty declamation on ethical common-places, was considered quite legitimate even in the Augustan age. . . . The present low estimate of Seneca is due to the reaction (a most healthy one, it is true) that has replaced the extravagant admiration in which his poems were for more than two centuries held' (Crittwell: 'History of Roman Literature') All Seneca's plays were translated into English before 1580.

CHAPTER IX.

POETRY FROM 1500 TO 1579 A.D.

THE most convenient order to adopt in this chapter will not be the strictly (and viciously) chronological one. Starting with Henryson and his Scotch successors, Dunbar, Douglas, and Lyndesay, we come south to Hawes, Skelton and Barclay, and pass away from the 'old order' with Wyatt and Surrey.

We have taken Robert Henryson out of his century in order not to separate him from his immediate successors. He must have been dead before 1506, for Dunbar's 'Lament for the Makers' (poets), which dates from about that year, mentions him among dead poets after Chaucer, Gower, Barbour, Lydgate, Blind Harry, and others:

'In Dunfermelyne he has done ronne (whispered)
With gud Maister Robert Henrisoun.'

He was a schoolmaster and notary public at Dunfermline in Fifeshire. We have already mentioned his sequel to Chaucer's 'Troilus and Cressida,' the 'Testament of Cresseid.' His pretty and fanciful poem, 'The Garmond of Good Ladies,' is included in most anthologies. In his pictorial treatment of allegory he prepares the way for Spenser. But it is as a pastoral poet and a fabulist that Henryson has attained a fame that is yet not equal to his deserts. His 'Robin and Makyne' is a 'disputoisson' between a shepherd and shepherdess, in which Makyne tells her love to Robin, who flouts her with 'lemman I luv nane'; but Robin repents when it is too late, only to be in turn rejected by Makyne, and left

'In dolour and in cair,
Kepand his hird under a huche (cliff)
Amang the holtis hair (grey hills).

This is the earliest British pastoral, and yet it is hardly surpassed by any later poem in a class to which our poets have never taken very kindly nor greatly excelled in. A living critic of fine taste says of Henryson with pardonable enthusiasm: 'He narrates with a gaiety, an ease, a rapidity not to be surpassed in English literature between Chaucer and Burns. . . . He had withal an abundance of wit, humour, and good sense; he had considered life and his fellow men, nature and religion, the fashions and abuses of his epoch, with the grave observant amiability of a true poet; he was directly in sympathy with many things; he loved to read and to laugh; it was his business to moralise and teach. It was natural that he should choose the fable as a means of expressing himself.' His 'Moral Fables' are the best poetical apologues in the language, and even a French critic is fain to admit that 'The Taill of the Uplandis Mous and the Burges Mous' 'has never been better told than by Henryson, and this can be affirmed without forgetting *La Fontaine*.' From it we quote three of the concluding stanzas:

'Wer I in-to the kith (home) that I come fra,
 For weill nor wo suld never cum agane."
 With that scho tuke hir leif and furth can ga,
 Quhylis (whiles) throw the corne and quhylis throw the plane.
 Quhen scho wes furth and fre scho wes ful fane,
 And merilie merkit (hastened) unto the mure.
 I can nocht tell how efterwart scho fure (fare),
 But I hard say scho passit to hir den
 Als warme als woll, suppose (although) it wes nocht greit,
 Full benely (abundantly) stuffit, baith but and ben (outer and
 inner room),
 Of beinis and nuttis, peis, ry, and quheit (wheat);
 Quhen-ever scho list scho had aneuch to eit
 In quyet and eis (ease), withoutin ony dreid;
 Bot to hir sisteris feist na mair scho yeid (went).
 Blissit be sempill lyfe withoutin dreid!
 Blissit be sober feist in quyetie!
 Quha hes aneuch, of na mair hes he neid,
 Thocht it be lytill in-to quantitie.
 Greit abundance and blind prosperitie
 Ofttymes makis hne evill conclusionn.
 The sweetest lyfe thairfor in this cuntrie
 Is sickernes (security), with small possessioun.

The approximate date of Dunbar's birth is inferred from the fact that he entered the University of St. Andrews in 1475; he travelled as a Franciscan friar in England, Scotland, and the Continent; he is thought to have been employed on business of state by James IV., from whom he received an annuity.

William
Dunbar,
1460—1520.

Dunbar's place in our literature is an honourable one; among the writers who have used the 'Scotch' dialect (*i.e.*, northernmost English) there is no poet, except Henryson and Douglas, who has the slightest claim to be ranked as his equal until we come to Burns. It has been claimed for Dunbar that he is as superior to Henryson as Henryson is supposed to be to Douglas. Even Mr. Lang contents himself with the dictum that 'Douglas's rank is that of an accomplished versifier.' Professor Nichol will

'Bear, like the Turk, no brother near the throne'

of Dunbar. These judgments are, at the least, open to criticism, and, according to Professor Courthope, they need revision. 'Dunbar,' says the last-named critic, 'while possessing a rich, vigorous, and versatile imagination, wanted the qualities which entitle a man to the front rank in the history of national poetry. . . . His poems show a shrewd knowledge of men and manners, and remarkable skill in presenting, under a variety of novel aspects, the somewhat narrow range of themes acceptable to a court.'

The variety of Dunbar's work is very considerable; among his best poems are, 'The Golden Targe,' 'The Thrissill and the Rois,' and 'The Daunce of the Seyn Deidly Synnis.' In the first of these Dunbar displays his powers of picturesque description in a poem in the style of the 'Romaunt of the Rose' and 'The Flower and the Leaf.'¹ 'The Thistle

¹ In 'The Golden Targe,' Dunbar represents himself as going out on the conventional May morning, falling asleep by the water-side and seeing in a dream a magnificent ship; from this disembark many goddesses, including Venus, Aurora, Fortune, May, and Nature, to whom the birds and flowers do homage; while Cupid appears on the scene surrounded by attendant gods. The poet advances to see the heavenly visitors more clearly, but Venus, catching sight of him, bids her friends fall upon him. Beauty and Youth, Innocence, Dignity, Honour, and many more, attack him together or in turn; but Reason interposes his 'Golden Targe' and keeps him in safety, until Presence (by which, as Warton says, 'the poet understands that irresistible incentive accruing to the passion of love by being often admitted to the company of the beloved object') blinds Reason and wounds the poet, who falls a captive to Beauty. Then he has to suffer at the hands of Dissimulation, New

and the Rose' is an allegorical poem on the marriage of James IV. with Margaret, daughter of Henry VII. (1503). The poet finds himself rebuked by Aurora for lying in bed after 'the lark has done the mirry day proclame' (of course on a May morning). He is bidden to rise and carry out his intention 'to discryve the ross¹ of most plesance.' He follows Aurora into a beautiful garden, whither Dame Nature bids all the birds, beasts, and flowers to appear before her—the swallow, the roe, and the yarrow (sneewort) being sent to collect them respectively. The lion is crowned king of beasts, and enjoined to protect the weak and distribute equal justice; the eagle she 'crownit king of fowlis'; the 'awfull thrissil with his busche of spairis' is given the lordship of plants and flowers, and is especially counselled to cherish the 'fressche ross.' The rose 'of colour red and white,' Queen of Flowers, is then wedded to the thistle, and the birds sing so loudly that they wake the poet. A stanza from the concluding portion of the poem, describing the gleeful song of the birds, will give the reader some slight idea of Dunbar's work:²

'Thȝ merle scho sang, "haill rois of most delyt,
Haill of all flouris quene and soverane :"
Thȝ lark scho sang, "haill roiss, both reid and quhyt,
Most plesand flour, of miehty colouris twane :"
The nyctingail sang, "haill naturis suffragant,
In bewty, nurtour, and every nobilness,
In riche array, renown and gentilness.'³

The drift of 'The Dance of the Seven Deadly Sins' is sufficiently described by its title. If the student will read

Acquaintance, Danger, and, finally, Grief, whose prisoner he is when a wind blows through the trees, scattering the leaves and shattering the vision. The poem closes with a fine eulogy ('a laboured encomium, according to Warton) on 'reverend Chaucer, rose of rethoris all,' 'mornle Gower,' and 'Lydgate laureate.' The metre of the 'Golden Targe' is a nine-lined stanza, of which there is a single line for lines 1, 2, 4, 6, 8, and another for lines 3, 5, 7, 9: *i.e.*, *aabababab*. The date of its composition is uncertain, but it was printed in 1508.

¹ *i.e.*, Rose, the allegorical heraldic representative of Margaret; similarly, the Thistle is James.

² The poem is reprinted in full in Skeat's 'Specimens of English Literature, 1304—1579' (Clarendon Press).

³ In the extracts from the English writers of this period it has not been thought useful to show their mere peculiarities of *spelling*: in quoting from the northern dialect, however, of course no attempt is made to convert the language into modern (southern) English. The only words in the stanza above which can possibly puzzle any reader are 'scho' and 'quhyt' = 'she' and 'white' respectively.

it carefully for himself,¹ he will find instructive exercise in deciding between the following contradictory criticisms of Professors Nichol and Courthope. The former says: 'His masterpiece, "The Dance of the Seven Deadly Sins," may have been suggested by passages in "Piers Plowman," as it in turn transmitted its influence through Sackville to the "Faery Queen"; but the horrid crew of vices, summoned from their dens by lines each vigorous as the crack of a whip, are real, and Scotch, and contemporary, drawn from a knowledge of the world, not from books; these supplied Dunbar with his terminology, that with his thought.' But Courthope: 'Lord Hailes, Warton, Campbell, and other critics, have regarded this poem as a proof of Dunbar's original genius—credit to which he is hardly entitled. Little invention was in fact required for the composition, which is merely a literary adaptation of the "Dance of Death," a long-established pageant in the carnivals of the Continent. Lord Hailes observes: "The drawing of the picture is bold, the figures well grouped. I do not recollect ever to have seen the 'Seven Deadly Sins' painted by a more masterly pencil than that of Dunbar." In the grouping of the sins the Scottish allegorist merely followed the usual theological order;² and, as regards the drawing, no reader of the "Vision of Piers the Plowman" will be prepared to admit that there can be any comparison between Langland's portrait of "Envy" and [Dunbar's in stanza 5].' To the rest of Dunbar's works we can give little space, but the 'Lament for the Makars' (i.e., poets), written 'when he was seik,' must not be quite unnoticed; the pathetic poem in which he rehearses the victories of death over knight, champion, lady, clerk, art-magician, and leech, concludes with a more personal note of mourning for his fellow 'makars' and the reflection:

' Sen he has all my brether ta'en,
He will nocht lat me leif alane.
On forse I mon his nyxt prey be
*Timor mortis conturbat me.*³

¹ It consists of eleven stanzas only, and is given in full in Ward's 'English Poets,' Vol. I., and in Eyre-Todd's 'Medieval Scottish Poetry.'

² Pride, ire, envy, covetousness, sloth, lechery, gluttony.

³ This Latin line ends every verse. 'Sen' = since; 'mon' = must.

Sen for the deid remeid is none,
Best is that we for deid dispone,
Effir our deid that leif may we:
*Timor mortis conturbat me.*¹

Douglas was a younger son of Archibald 'Bell-the-Cat,' Earl of Angus. Educated at the University of Gawnin Douglas, 1174—1522. St. Andrews and in Paris, he entered the Church and became Provost of St. Giles, Edinburgh, Abbot of Aberbrothock, and Bishop of Dunkeld. 'He appears also,' says Warton, 'to have been nominated by the Queen-regent to the archbishopric either of Glasgow or of St. Andrews; but the appointment was repudiated by the Pope. In 1513, to avoid the persecutions of the Duke of Albany, he fled from Scotland into England and was most graciously received by King Henry VIII., who, in consideration of his literary merit, allowed him a liberal pension.'² He died of the plague in London, 1522.'

Douglas's chief work, his translation of the 'Aeneid,'³ is notable for several reasons. We shall find before the end of the sixteenth century a large number of versions of the classics, but there is no metrical translation of any of them in English before Douglas's 'Aeneid.' Moreover, this work of Douglas has stamped its author as the typical poet of the earliest years of the revival of learning in Scotland;⁴ and,

¹ The date of this poem is uncertain: it was printed in 1508. The chief of Dunbar's other works are, 'The Two Married Women and the Widow,' a satire which Professor Nichol considers 'his most elaborate composition, and that which ranks next in originality to the "Dance";' 'Tidings fra the Sessions,' a dialogue between two rustics, satirising the supreme civil law-court of Scotland; 'The Justes between the Tallyour and the Souter'; 'The Friars of Berwick'; and many short poems. He had a 'flying' or quarrel in verse with 'Good Maister Walter Kennedy,' who is mentioned among the 'makars.' This Kennedy wrote a poem, 'In Praise of Aige,' an 'invective against Mouththanklessness,' and other works, none of which are considered to be of any literary value.

² 'In England,' Warton adds, 'he contracted a friendship with Polydoro Vergil, one of the classical scholars of Henry's court.' This Vergil (an Italian) wrote a Latin history of English affairs, afterwards used by the Elizabethan chroniclers.

³ He also translated the 'thirteenth' book written by Maphæus Vegius (died 1458). In the Prologue of the 'Throtten Bulk of Eneados chit to Virgill be Maphæus Vegius' Douglas tells how Virgil appeared to him in a dream, and, partly by argument, partly by twenty blows with a cudgel, induced him to include that book in his translation.

Scott's lines are worth recording:—

'More pleased that, in a barbarous age,
He gave rude Scotland Virgil's page,
Than that beneath his rule he held
The bishopric of fair Dunkeld' ('Marionnet,' vi. 11).

⁴ 'The revival of letters,' says Mr. Andrew Lang, 'when it reached Scotland, was crushed out by the nobles, who hated dominies and Italians. . . . The likes

finally, the version is of considerable poetic merit. 'We must not,' says Mr. Lang, 'ask the impossible from Douglas, —we must not expect exquisite philological accuracy; but he had the "root of the matter," an intense delight in Virgil's music and in Virgil's narrative, a perfect sympathy with "Sweet Dido," and that keen sense of the human life of Greek, Trojan, and Latin, which enabled him in turn to make them live in Scottish rhyme. If he talks of "the nuns of Bacchus," and if his Sibyl admonishes Aeneas to "tell his beads," Douglas is merely using what he thinks the legitimate freedom of the translator.' The following is a favourable specimen of Douglas's work as translator; it is a description of night:

'The nycht followis, and euery very wicht
 Throw out the erd has caught anone richt
 The sound plesand slepe thame likit best;
 Woldis and rageand seis war at rest:
 And the sternis thar myd cours rollis down,
 All feyldis still, but ¹ othir noyis or sown;
 And be-tis and birdis of diuers culloris seir,²
 And quhatsumevir in the braid lochis weir,
 Or among buskis harsk ³ leyndis ⁴ ondir the spray,
 Throw nichtis silence slepit quhar thai lay,
 Mesing ⁵ ther besy thocht and curis smart,
 All irksom laubour forzet and out of hart.'

The most interesting of Douglas's work, however, is to be found in the prologues which he has prefixed to each book of the 'Aeneid'; these show that the writer has a considerable gift for original poetry, which we can see also from his two other chief works, the 'Palace of Honour' and 'King Hart.' 'The Palace of Honour' (soon after 1500) is an allegorical poem, with the usual May morning and vision, the conventional machinery of allegory; it is in the metre of Dunbar's 'Golden Targe,' which in form it resembles; the

and laurels of Italy, the sweet Virgilian measures, were soon blighted and silenced by the wind and hail of Scotland, by clerical austerity, and the storms of war.' This quotation will prevent the student inferring from the sentence above that Douglas has any such position in the history of Scotch poetry as Surrey and Wyatt have in English. Douglas is a 'humanist,' and his chief work is the outcome of his classical learning: the influence, however, of *Italian* literature on his thought and style is not so strong as it is on Chaucer, whose respectful disciple he is.

¹ Without.

² Harsh, rough.

³ Softening.

⁴ Various.

⁵ Lives, inhabits.

analysis given of that poem, and subsequently of Hawes' 'Pastime of Pleasure,' will make it unnecessary for us to dwell on the subject-matter of any other of the numerous more or less meritorious allegories of the day. 'The Palace of Honour,' poor as a composition, is historically interesting,' says Courthope, 'as marking the transition from the old allegory on the subject of love, to the moral style which came into favour through the influence of the Classical Renaissance. It blends medieval, classical, and theological elements in the most curious way. Cupid is there, but he is incidental rather than essential; Venus and the Muses are there too; but the astonishing thing is that one of the latter, Calliope, explains that a 'lusty ship' tossing upon the sea of the world is the state of Grace necessary for the salvation of mankind. 'King Hart' (*i.e.* Heart) is an allegory of the soul of man, in which the various faculties and powers are personified; it is in eight-line stanzas (*ababbcb*). Douglas handles his metres with taste and skill: 'though the vocabulary is exceedingly archaic, yet compared with the hobbling verse of contemporary English poets, like Hawes, Skelton, and Barclay, the rhythmical movement in Douglas's stanzas is the very soul of melody.' He has a good eye for landscape and for colour, and excels in brilliant and often gorgeous description.

Lyndesay, born about the year 1490 and educated at St. Andrews, entered the service of James IV. and became a sort of tutor or 'governor' to the young prince, afterwards James V. In 1530 he was knighted and made 'Lord Lyon King-at-Arms.' He died in 1557 or the next year.

Lyndesay is a pamphleteer in verse: his work is voluminous, and has little (if any) of the higher qualities of poetry; nevertheless, it is extremely interesting, being in nearly every case more or less closely connected with the politico-religious movements of the day. Lyndesay speaks out on the reforming side with no uncertain sound. We find among his writings the usual proportion of imitative allegory, but much of it bears directly on the events of his time. One of his best works—'The Dreeme'—begins with an address to his royal pupil (now King), in which there are

several autobiographical details. In this poem (in the design of which there is little originality,¹ but more imagination than is usual with Lyndesay), the stanzas which deal with the poet's conversation with 'Jhone the Common-weill' are a vigorous satire on the condition of State and Church in Scotland; it closes with some bold and severe advice to the King. Lyndesay is seen here at his best, for his excellence is in didactic satire. 'The Complaynt' (1529) is a personal petition for some reward for his services mingled with a denunciation of the clergy of the day and more advice to the King, who, now being 'to no man subjectit,'² is exhorted to walk in the paths of justice.³ The following lines are a fair sample of the 'Complaint' and give a few interesting details of the relation between the King and the poet: 'I call to witness in my favour,' says the latter, 'the Queen thy mother, the lord chancellor, thy nurse, with many another.'

'Auld Willie Dillie, wer he on lyre,
My lyfe full weill he could discryve :
Quhow as ane chapman beris his pak,
I bure thy grace upon my bak. . . .

As I at lenth into my Dreame
My sindry servyce did expreme,
I wate thou luffit me better than
Nor now sum wife dois her gude man.

Then men tyll uther did recorde,
Said Lyndsay wald be maid ane lord ;
Thow hes maid lords, schir, be Sanct Geill
Of sum that hes nocht servit so weill.'⁴

¹ The poet wanders out (in *January*) and sees the birds complaining to Dame Nature and calling for warm weather. He lies down in a cavern and (being an allegorical poet) falls asleep and has a vision, in which he sees Remembrance, who conducts him through hell and heaven; 'from Paradise,' as Warton puts it, 'a very rapid transition is made to Scotland.' There Sir Commonwealth gives him a satirical account of public affairs, after which Remembrance brings him back to his cave and the poet awakes. He writes out his vision, and adds to it the advice to and censure of James referred to above, for the 'incredible boldness' of which he deserves praise. 'Most of the addresses to James V. by the Scotch poets,' says Warton, 'are satires instead of panegyrics.'

² James IV. was killed at Flodden in 1513, and his infant son became James V. The Queen, his mother—Dunbar's 'Rose'—became regent, till she was displaced by the Duke of Albany. In 1524, after much fierce feud, the twelve-year-old King had 'the governance of all Scotland' nominally put into his hands; but in 1528 he managed to rid himself of his tyrannical protector, Angus, and determined to be no longer 'to such counsellors coactit.'

³ And to reward David Lyndesay: he was knighted and given the office mentioned above shortly afterwards.

⁴ Lyndesay is at his best as regards pathos in his references to the young King, to

'Ane Satyre of the Thrie Estaitis' is a Morality play, which Professor Nichol calls 'the first approach to a regular dramatic composition in Scotland. It is,' he also says, 'a well-sustained invective against the follies and vices of the time . . . [and] abounds in exhibitions of the author's unrestrained Rabelaisian humour.' 'The Monarchie' (about 1552) is a chronicle in verse in the form of a dialogue between a courtier and Experience on 'the miserable estate of the world.' It derives its title from the fact that Experience tells the courtier the history of the famous monarchies of the world from the Creation; he attacks the Popes vigorously¹ and ends with a description of the Judgment Day.

At this point we must retrace our steps, in time to the Stephen Hawes, beginning of the century, in locality to the 1488?—1520? English court. All that we know of the life of Stephen Hawes may be told in one sentence. Educated at Oxford, he is known to have travelled in France, and to have been groom of the chamber under Henry VII. The dates of his birth and death are not known with certainty, though those given in the margin are doubtless near the truth.

His chief work—the only one by which he is remembered—compendiously described on its title-page as 'The History of Graund Amoure and La Bel Pucell, called the Pastime of Pleasure, containing the Knowledge of the Seven Sciences

whom he seems to have been sincerely (if not quite disinterestedly) attached. In the 'Dreame' he had written:

'Quhen thou was young, I bare the in myne arms
Full tenderlye till thou begoneth to gang;
And in thy bed oft happit the full warme,
With lute in hand syns softly to the sang.

And he goes on to say how he used to dress himself up to represent characters from stories for him, acting 'interludes' for his benefit.

Lyndesay may almost be said to have been born a Protestant, says Professor Nichol; but he never ventured beyond the range of the leading reformers of his age. . . . His mission was to amuse and arouse the people of his time, to affront them with a reflection of their vices, and to set to rough music the thunder and the whirlwind of sixteenth-century Iconoclasm.' Among a large quantity of the productions of Lyndesay not described above should be noticed 'The Complaynt of the Kinge's Papyngo' (i.e. parrot) and 'The Testament of the Papyngo' (1560), satires on the clergy; 'The Historie of Squier Meldrum,' a humorous metrical romance; 'Kittie's Confession,' etc.

and the Course of Man's Life in this World,' seems to have been written about 1506. The title thus quoted at length fairly describes the contents of this long allegorical poem, of which a somewhat more detailed account *may* interest the student. The knight, Graund Amoure (who narrates the story), is told by Fame of the fair lady, La Bel Pucell, and determines to win her. Fame encourages him, but bids him first go to the Tower of Doctrine, giving him as guides Governance and Grace; Doctrine receives him kindly, and sends him to each of her 'seven daughters most expert in cunning'—viz., Grammar, Logic, Rhetoric, Arismetrik (*i.e.*, arithmetic), Music, Geometry, and Astronomy,¹ and thus the poet has the opportunity (which he certainly does not let slip) of dilating on each of these various studies. In the Tower of Music, Graund Amoure beholds La Pucell; after a 'dolorous and lowly disputation' between them, the lady grants the knight her love, but he is to keep it secret from her friends, who presently come to take her away. Graund Amoure is let into the Tower of Chivalry by Fortitude; he goes into the Temple of Mars, where he hears an argument between that god and Fortune, and is subsequently made a knight by King Melizus at the advice of Minerva. Graund Amoure then departs to seek adventures: he falls in with one Godfrey Gobelive, who is a defamer of women, for which before long the rascal is well whipped² by Correction, and together they visit the temples of Mars and Venus. The knight continues his career; he overthrows a giant with three heads (Falsehood, Crafty Imagination, Perjury), and then another with seven. Finally, after ridding the earth of a hideous metal monster made by enchantment, he is married to the Bel Pucell. He lives with her in great happiness for a while, till 'a fair old man' enters his chamber and 'arrests' him; it is Age, bringing with him Policy and Avarice, whom the knight makes his companions.

¹ The first three of these form the *Tritium*, and the last four the *Quadrivium*; these seven together composed the medieval academic curriculum.

² This incident, which is evidently intended to be humorous, is described in riming decasyllabic couplets—the older 'riding rime,' the later 'heroic couplet'—a metre which Hawes handles very tamely. The bulk of the work is in the seven-lined stanza, of which a specimen is given on p. 150.

'But when I thought longest to endure,
 Death with his dart arrest me suddenly;
 "Obey!" he said, "as ye may be sure
 You can resist nothing the contrary
 But that you must obey me naturally.
 What you avaieth such treasure to take
 Sithens by force ye must it now forsake?"'

So Death carries him off (not perhaps leaving the reader altogether inconsolable), and Remembrance makes his 'epitaphy.' Fame comes into the temple, discourses of the mighty dead, and promises that

'Of Graund Amoure, my knight in special,
 His name shall dure and be eternal.'

The work closes with a 'virtuous exhortation' from Time and Eternity, and an apology from the author for its deficiencies, first to Henry VII., and then to all poets. In the last verse we find Hawes

'Beseeching God for to give me grace
 Bookes to compile of moral virtue,
 Of my master Lydgate to follow the trace;'

and this is characteristic: Hawes' two great objects in poetry are to teach 'moral virtue,' and to follow Lydgate, whose disciple he delights to call himself at every opportunity. Under these circumstances we can scarcely expect his poetry to be of a very high order; but we should do wrong to pass over him with contempt: his faults' and his merits lie very close together, for while we often find in him 'a sweet simplicity, a pensive air, a subdued cheerfulness, which have a strange charm at this distance of dissimilar time,'¹ we are also apt to find his simplicity degenerating into vapidness, his pensive air resembling a sleepy one, and his cheerfulness approaching a very irritating self-complacency. Of tediousness and prolixity

¹ Mr. Churton Collins, in a critical notice inserted before a selection from Hawes in 'The English Poets,' ed. Ward. The above analysis shows that there is sufficient resemblance of an elementary nature between the 'Pastime of Pleasure' and the 'Faerie Queene' to make some acquaintance with the former desirable. 'The two poems are,' Mr. Collins says, 'similar in allegorical purpose, similar in the development of their allegory. Some of the incidents, though not identical, are of the same character, and if it would be going too far to say that Spenser was a disciple of Hawes, it would not be going too far to say that Spenser had been a careful student of the 'Pastime of Pleasure,' had been indebted to it for many a useful hint, many a slight preliminary sketch, many a pleasing effect of rhythm and cadence.'

he is also often accused, but this arises more perhaps from our lack of interest in both the matter and form of his work than from any special defect on the part of the poet; a long poem, treating of subjects which do not appeal to us, in a style altogether out of harmony with the literary standards of our own day, is apt to seem both tedious and prolix, when its author is not a man of genius; Hawes' master, Lydgate, seems to us almost as great a sinner in that direction as his pupil.¹

Of Skelton's life the following are the chief known facts: he was educated at Oxford (and perhaps also at John Skelton, about 1460-1529, Cambridge), and entered the Church. He was tutor to Prince Henry (afterward Henry VIII.), with whom he seems to have been a favourite, and he was given the rectory of Diss in Norfolk. He was undoubtedly a man of considerable learning, but it is alleged that he led an evil life; possibly he owes this reputation to the foes his satires made for him. His invective against Wolsey caused the powerful cardinal to order the poet's arrest; but the latter fled, and taking sanctuary at Westminster (1522-23), died there in 1529, the year of his enemy's fall.

Skelton's fame is due chiefly to his 'Phyllyp Sparrowe,' on the one hand, and on the other to his satirical writings, notably 'The Boke of Colyn Clout,' and 'Why come ye not to Court?' The first of these is a graceful elegy on the death of a bird, which belonged to 'goodly mistress Jane' (Scrope), who laments the death of her pet; the poet adds a delicate and pretty description of the fair Jane, who

'is the violet,
The daisy delectable,
The columbine commendable,
The gillyflower amicable;
For this goodly flower,
This blossom of fresh colour,
So Jupiter me succour,
She flourisheth new and new
In beauty and virtue.'

¹ The student, however, who is not acquainted with Lydgate's and Hawes' works at first hand, may take a stronger view on the authority of Scott, who calls Hawes 'ten times more tedious than his original.'

Hawes' other works need scarcely be named: the chief are, 'The Conversion of Swearers,' 'The Example of Virtue,' and 'A Joyful Meditation of All England.'

The metre in which the above (like all Skelton's best work) is written is now known as 'Skeltonical'; the student will observe that it consists of rimed trimeters, i.e. the normal line has three accents and six syllables, but that variations in the number of accents and of syllables are frequent: alliteration is a marked feature of his verse, and three or more lines often rhyme together.¹ On the nature of his verse, with its peculiar defects, and the merits which especially fit it for satire, the poet says,

'—though my rime be ragged,
Tattered and jagged,
Rudely rain-beaten,
Rusty and moth-eaten,
If ye take well therewith,
It hath in it some pith.'

The above lines are from 'Colyn Clout,' a satire directed against the vices of the clergy and the abuses of the Church; the object of the satirist (he declares) is only to make men mend their ways: he takes upon him 'thus copiously to write' out of no malice, nor (he says) does he rebuke any virtuous man. It is worth noticing that he is no favourer of the 'reforming' views in religion, as he makes especially evident by his lines in 'Colyn Clout' against those who favour the new doctrines.² Skelton's delineation of Wolsey in 'Why come ye not to Court?' written with the express purpose of stirring up against the king's favourite the great nobles of the day, who

'Dare not look out at door,
For dread of the mastiff cur,
For dread of the butcher's dog,'

forms part of one of the most skilful and scathing personal invectives in our language: the writer seems carried away by the intensity of his hatred for vice, rather than by personal spite; his verse, which rushes on like a foam-

¹ The approximate date of 'Phyllyp Sparrowe' is fixed by the fact that Alexander Barclay (died 1552) mentions it slightly in the 'Ship of Fools,' 1508.

² His invectives against those who

'have a smack
Of Luther's sack,
And a burning spark
Of Luther's walk,
And are somewhat suspect
In Luther's sect,'

as well as against Wyollfites, Hussians, etc.

ing mountain-stream, leaping from crag to crag, has a singular power of carrying the reader with it. The poet is declamatory and denunciatory merely; he appeals to our emotions to join him in making head against the 'mad Amalek,' against whom he brings accusation upon accusation, not to convince us of the cardinal's wickedness, of which he takes it for granted we are assured, but to force us to feel as strongly on the subject as he himself does. The whole poem is a cry, but not a hysterical one.

Of Skelton's other work little need here be said. Among his 'Skeltonical' writings, 'Ware the Hawk' is an invective against a priest with whom he has a personal quarrel; while 'in "The Tunning of Elinore Rummyng"' his powers of pure description and his skill in the lower walks of comedy are seen in their highest perfection.¹ Skelton also wrote a large number of other works, not in his own peculiar metre, and not of great value. Such are his morality, 'Magnificence,' his allegorical satiric poem 'The Bowge² of Court,' in 'rime royal,' and his 'Speke Parrot,' in the same metre. His songs and lyrics are sometimes very graceful, and are far better than any of his contemporaries' efforts in that direction.

Alexander Barclay made a translation of Sebastian Brandt's 'Narrenschiff' 'in the college of St. Barclay
1476?—1552. Mary Ottery, in the county of Devonshire,' but he added to and altered his original considerably, so that his 'Ship of Fools' is almost entitled to rank as an original poem. Among his more respectable productions are five eclogues, partly adapted from Aeneas Sylvius and from Mantuan, partly original, which are our earliest English pastorals, with the exception of Henryson's 'Robin and Makyne': 'the bucolic style is adopted by him merely as the vehicle of a moral allegory.' Between Barclay and Skelton there was a long literary quarrel:

'Wise men love vertue, wilde people wantonnes;
It longeth not my science nor cuning,
For Philip the sparrow the dirige to sing.'

¹ Mr. Churton Collins, who adds: 'In this sordid and disgusting delineation of humble life, he may fairly challenge the supremacy of Swift and Hogarth.' The 'heroine' of the poem is the keeper of a tavern.

² *Bouge* (Fr. *bouche*), properly 'food,' 'allowance of victuals,' and so 'profit' or 'rewards.'

The following stanza is a fair sample of Barclay's indifferent versification; it is from his character of the Student or Bookworm, the First Fool in his Slip:

'Lo in likewise of bookes I have store,
But few I reade, and fewer understande;
I folowe not their doctrine nor their lore,
It is enough to beare a booke in hande:
It were too much to be in such a lande,
For to be bounde to loke within the booke;
I am content on the sayre coveryng to looke.'

The first modern English poet, the first English poet in whose work we find comparatively few traces of Wyatt and Surrey. mediæval English poetry, is undoubtedly Sir Thomas Wyatt. This issue has commonly been clouded by the familiar and misleading collocation 'Surrey and Wyatt,' which may be ultimately due to 'Tottel's Miscellany.' This work, containing most of the known poems¹ of both these writers, was published in 1557, several years after their death. In the 'Miscellany' there is nothing to enable us to classify the pieces chronologically, and there is little internal evidence from which we can form any judgment as to the influence the one may have exercised on the other.

Mr. Churton Collins thinks 'that Wyatt was the master-spirit, and that Surrey has been enabled to throw him so completely and so unfairly into the shade *mainly because he had his friend's patterns to work upon*. Wyatt was his senior by at least fourteen years, and Wyatt's poems, if we except at least the satires and the Penitential Psalms, were in all probability early works.' On the other hand, Professor Skeat says: 'His [Wyatt's] songs are an *inferior imitation* of Surrey's.' How they can be an 'inferior imitation' of the work of a man at least fourteen years his junior, who was not more than twenty-five years old when Wyatt died, is not obvious. Perhaps Professor Hales may be allowed to settle the question. 'There is every reason to believe,' he says, 'if we study the biographies of Wyatt and Surrey, that Wyatt, and not Surrey, as is so commonly stated, led

¹ Surrey's translation of the 'Æneid' was not included in the volume, but published separately (by Tottel) a fortnight later. Nor does the 'Miscellany' ('Songs and Sonnets' is its proper title) contain Wyatt's metrical translation of (some of) the Psalms.

the way in the work which is associated with their names—that Wyatt, and not Surrey, was the first to attempt the improvement of our metres by Italian example and precedent. As early as 1526, when Surrey was certainly not more than ten years old, perhaps only eight, Leland had “honoured” Wyatt, then twenty-three, as the most accomplished poet of his time. . . . *Tulit aller honores*. But surely it is time Wyatt had a more general recognition as the first, in time at least, of those “courtly makers” Pattenham speaks of—the leader in the remarkable Italianised movement which they effected: and should no longer be regarded as a mere follower of one who, in fact, followed him—as the heir of one whom he himself endowed. It ought to be noticed more than it is that the metrical structure of the sonnet was better understood by him than by Surrey, not one of whose efforts in this kind was according to the Petrarchian model. But, whether this credit is given him or not, surely it is time he should more generally have some credit for having introduced the sonnet into our literature.’ Finally, Surrey several times refers to Wyatt as his ‘master.’

The changes that these two men effected in the whole form and spirit of our national song were so momentous, and their influence was so rapid, so widespread, and so enduring, that we venture again to call Mr. Churton Collins as a witness. ‘To Wyatt and Surrey,’ he says, ‘our debt is a great one. They introduced and naturalised the Sonnet. . . . In Wyatt we have our first classical satirist. . . . Their tone, their style, their rhythm, their measures, were at once adopted by a school of disciples, and have ever since maintained their popularity among poets. In their lyrics, indeed, is to be found the seed of everything that is most charming in the form of Jonson and Herrick, of Waller and Suckling, of Cowley and Prior. They gave us—but this is the glory of Surrey alone—the first specimens of blank verse that our language can boast. They were the creators of that majestic measure, the heroic quatrain. . . . They were the first of our poets who had learned the great secret of transfusing the spirit of one language into that of another. who had the good taste to

What they did
for English
Literature.

select the best models and the good sense to adhere to them. They gave the deathblow to that rudeness, that grotesqueness, that prolixity, that diffuseness, that pedantry, which had deformed with fatal persistency the poetry of mediævalism.¹

Of Wyatt's life little need be said. Of good family and university education—he was entered at St. Sir Thomas
Wyatt,
1509-42. John's College, Cambridge, 1515—he was early introduced to the English court. He was sent to Spain in 1537 on a mission to the Emperor, having visited Italy, it is said, some ten years earlier in the train of an English ambassador. In 1539 he was sent on a second mission to the Emperor, which took him to France and the Low Countries; on his return he was thrown into prison at Bonner's instigation, but was released again (1541), and was employed in the King's service at the time of his death in the next year.² He is, it may be noted, sometimes called 'Sir Thomas Wyatt the Elder,' to distinguish him from his son and namesake, 'the Younger,' the leader of 'Wyatt's Rebellion.'

The best of Wyatt's works are undoubtedly his three satires, viz., 'Of the Mean and Sure Estate,' which tells the fable of the town and country mouse (Horace, 'Satires,' II., vi.); 'Of the Courtier's Life' (adapted from a contemporary Italian poet, Alemanni); and 'How to Use the Court and Himself Therein,' written to Sir Francis Bryan.³

¹ The following stanzas are from a poem of Surrey's on the death of his friend :

'Wyatt] resteth here, that quick could never rest ;
Whose heavenly gifts increased by disdain,
And virtue sank the deeper in his breast ;
Such profit he by envy could obtain.

* * * * *
A visage, stern and mild ; where both did grow,
Vice to condemn, in virtue to rejoice :
Amid great storms whom grace assured so,
To live upright and smile at fortune's choice.

A hand that taught what might be said in rhyme :
That rest Chaucer the glory of his wit ;
A mark, the which (unperfected for time)
Some may approach, but never none may hit.'

The metre, the student will observe, is that with which he is familiar in Gray's 'Elegy' and Dryden's 'Annus Mirabilis' : it is sometimes known as the 'heroic quatrain,' and this is one of the first examples of its use in English. Wyatt, we may say, without much risk of error, introduced it.

³ Bryan was himself a writer of verse, some of which is believed to be among the work of the 'unknown author' in 'Tottel's Miscellany.' He executed in 1548 a translation of a French treatise (itself from a Spanish original), 'A Dispraise of the Life of a Courtier.'

These satires are acute and interesting, full of manliness and free from personal bitterness; their wit, observation, and polish, show the writer to have been 'a scholar and a gentleman,' and a man of the world. An idea of his style and metre¹ may be gained from this short extract, where he speaks of his own unfitness for 'the courtier's life':

'I am not he such cloquence to boast,
To make the crow in singing as the swan;
Nor call the lion of coward beasts the most,
That cannot take a mouse, as the cat can;
And he that dieth for hunger of the gold
Call him Alexander; and say that Pan
Passeth Apollo in music manifold:
Praise "Sir Topas" for a noble tale,
And scorn the story that the knight told;
Praise him for counsel that is drunk of ale:
Gin when he laughs that beareth all the sway,
Frown when he frowns, and groan when he is pale:
On other's lust to hang both night and day.'

Most of Wyatt's other poems—complaints, songs, sonnets, etc.—deal with love; most of them, too, are borrowed from, or at least modelled on, Italian and French poets.

The date of Howard's birth is not certainly known; it may have been one or two years earlier than is Henry Howard, Earl of Surrey, here stated. His father, the Earl of Surrey, 1516-47, became Duke of Norfolk in 1524, and from that date the poet assumed the (courtesy) title of Earl of Surrey. He and his father were accused of treason in 1546, and the poet was executed in the following year. The tradition that Surrey travelled in Italy rests on no evidence.

Surrey's version of 'Certain Books of the Aeneis'² is the first example of English blank verse. His handling of the metre is stiff and formal, but this is natural in a first experiment in English of such a novel kind; his translation is

¹ The metre known as *terza rima* is borrowed from the Italian (it is that of Dante's 'Divina Commedia'), and is used by Surrey in the first of the poems in Tottel (description of the restless state of a lover). The extract given above illustrates its construction; its rime-formula is *ababcbcdcd*, and so on, using each rime three times, except at the beginning and end.

² Viz., Books II. and IV. 'Mr. Craik thinks that Surrey's translation was suggested by the earliest Italian example of blank verse, viz., "a translation of the first [a mistake for 'second'] and fourth books of the 'Aeneid,' by the Cardinal Hippolito di Medici, or, as some say, by Molza, which was published at Venice in 1541." It also seems probable that Surrey was in some degree indebted to the translation made by Gawain Douglas' (Skeat).

faithful, but on the whole prosaic; there are, however, some passages which are spirited and poetic, though very few (if any) which can be praised for harmony. In the 'Songs and Sonnets' the poet is seen to greater advantage. We have already quoted (in a note) a specimen of his graver work, but his merit is perhaps more conspicuous in his love poems, of which the following sonnet may serve as a fair example :

'From Tuscan came my lady's worthy race ;
 Fair Florence was sometime her ancient seat ;
 The western isle, whose pleasant shore doth face
 Wild Camber's cliffs, did give her lively heat ;
 Fostered she was with milk of Irish breast :
 Her sire an earl, her dame of princes' blood.
 From tender years in Britain doth she rest,
 With king's child, where she tasteth costly food.
 Hunsdon did first present her to mine eyne,
 Bright is her hue, and Geraldine she hight.
 Hampton me taught to wish her first for mine ;
 And Windsor, alas ! doth chase me from her sight.
 Her beauty of kind,¹ her virtues from above :
 Happy is he that can obtain her love.'²

¹ *Of kind*, i.e. from or by nature.

² Almost the only law which regulates the metrical structure of the sonnet in English is that it shall contain fourteen lines; the specimen given above is of the form always used by Shakespeare; it consists of three quatrains, followed by a rhyming couplet. Some of Surrey's sonnets, however, approach more closely to the Italian model; and some of Wynn's are exact in form, but extremely harsh and unpoetical. The following 'Petrarchian stanza' is quoted from Milton, to exemplify the form of this kind of composition :

'Avenge, O Lord, Thy slaughtered saints, whose bones
 Lie scattered on the Alpine mountains cold ;
 Even them who kept Thy truth so pure of old,
 When all our fathers worshipped stocks and stones,
 Forget not; in Thy book record their groans
 Who were Thy sheep, and in their ancient fold
 Slain by the bloody Piedmontese that rolled
 Mother with infant down the rocks. Their moans
 The vales redoubled to the hills, and they
 To Heaven. Their martyred blood and ashes sow
 O'er all the Italian fields, where still doth sway
 The triple tyrant; that from these may grow
 A hundredfold, who having learned Thy way
 Early may fly the Babylonian woe.'

This sonnet is here printed so as to show its metrical structure; the first eight lines (the octave) have two rhymes, arranged thus: *abbaabba*; the following six (the sestet) have another two: *caded*. Milton himself only now and then uses this exact form, between which and the 'Shakespearean' almost every possible variation, as regards the arrangement of the lines and the number of rhymes, is to be found in our poetry.

The original title of 'Tottel's¹ Miscellany' was 'Songs and Sonnets, written by the Right Honourable Lord Henry Howard, Earl of Surrey, and others.' Although Surrey's name alone appears in the title, probably because of his rank, and his poems are the first in the volume, he is not the principal contributor in bulk, as there are ninety-six pieces of Wyatt's to his forty. Among the 'others' (besides Wyatt) were Bryan, John Heywood, Grimald, Lord Vaux, and Churchyard. To each of these last three a few words may be given. Nicholas Grimald (1520?—1561?) is believed to have edited the 'Miscellany'; he contributed to it a large number of poems, most of which are very like mere doggerel; two, however, are of more merit, and are at any rate of considerable interest as the first *original* English poems in blank verse (Surrey only used the metre in his translation). A few lines from 'The Death of Zoroas,' which is one of these (the other being 'The Death of Cicero'), are here given:

' But happily the soul fled to the stars,
Where, under him, he hath full sight of all
Whereto he gazed here with reaching look.
The Persians wailed such sapience to forgo;
The very foes, the Macedonians, wished
He would have lived—King Alexander self
Deemed him a man unmeet to die at all;
Who won like praise for conquest of his ire,
As for stout men in field that day subdued;
Who princes taught how to discern a man
That in his head so rare a jewel bears.'

Grimald's poetry was not of a high order, but he had evidently got considerable mastery over unrimed decasyllabics: among his other works are prose translations, e.g., Cicero's 'De Officiis.'

Thomas, Lord Vaux (1510-57) contributed to the 'Miscellany' a poem of fifty-six lines, part of which, from the mouth of the grave-digger in 'Hamlet,' has become very famous: here are the three stanzas which are sung (in slightly different form) by the gravedigger:

' I loathe that I did love,
In youth that I thought sweet,

¹ Tottel (or Tottell) was merely the publisher. The poems belong to the latter end of Henry VIII.'s reign, and the reigns of Edward VI. and Mary.

As time requires for my behove
Methinks they are not meet.

* * * *

For Age with stealing steps
Hath clawed me with his crutch,
And lusty Life away she leaps
As there had been none such.

* * * *

A pickaxe and a spade,
And eke a shrouding sheet,
A house of clay for to be made
For such a guest most meet.'

Some of Vaux's verse also appears in 'The Paradise of Dainty Devices' mentioned below, Thomas Churchyard, 1520?—1601. Churchyard was another of the contributors to 'Tottel's Miscellany.' A somewhat voluminous writer of both prose and verse, none of which is of much value, his best work is, perhaps, the 'tragedy' of 'Wolsey' in the 'Mirror for Magistrates.' A few lines from another poem of his are given here, as affording a fair idea of a kind of verse very popular with the readers of 'Tottel' and of Tudor literature generally, and as being interesting for the allusions they contain :

'Piers Plowman was full plain, and Chaucer's sp'rit was great,
Earl Surrey had a goodly vein, Lord Vaux the mark did beat;
And Phædr did hit the prick, in things he did translate;
And Edwards had a special gift; and divers men of late
Have helped our English tongue, that first was base and brute.
Oh, shall I leave out Skelton's name, the blossom of my fruit?'

The metre, as the student sees, consists of riming couplets, of which the first line has twelve syllables and the second fourteen: the twelve-syllable or six-foot line (Alexandrine) has a pause (or caesura) in the middle, which practically breaks it into two lines of three feet each, while the 'fourteener' has the pause after the fourth foot, breaking the line into two of eight syllables and six respectively. The metre was often printed in short lines, as, for example, in Lord Vaux's verses quoted above, where also the first (short) line rimes with the third.

Besides Tottel's (which is not actually Elizabethan) two other miscellanies claim our notice. The first of these is 'The Paradise of Dainty Devices,' which is described on

the title-page of the first edition (1576) as 'devised and written for the most part by Mr. Edwards'—he who 'had a special gift,' according to Churchyard—aided by 'sundry learned gentlemen, both of honour and worship.' It contains poems of Lord Vaux, Edwards,¹ Jasper Heywood,² the Earl of Oxford, William Hunnis, Francis Kinwelmersh,³ and many even less-known writers. The second of the two miscellanies mentioned above is 'A Gorgeous Gallery of Gallant Inventions,' compiled by one Proctor and contributed to by Anthony Munday and others: it is said to contain little or nothing of merit. We turn back from it to look at the work of a poet.

Early Elizabethan Miscellanies. Sackville was the only son of Sir Richard Sackville, of Buckhurst (Sussex). After being educated at both universities (like many others in those days), where he began to write verse, he entered Parliament. The work which gives him his place among English poets—the 'Induction' to 'The Complaint of the Duke of Buckingham,' and 'The Complaint' itself—appeared in the second edition of the 'Mirror for Magistrates' in 1563; his tragedy of 'Gorboduc,' written in conjunction with Thomas Norton (an account of which is given in chapter xi.), belongs to the early part of the previous year. The rest of Sackville's life was spent away from poetry: he drifted into politics. In 1567 he was made Lord Buckhurst, and became lord treasurer on the death of Burleigh (1598), after holding various public offices: King James, shortly after his accession, made him Earl of Dorset.

Of the general plan and execution of the 'Mirror for Magistrates' we shall speak presently: here we have but to consider Sackville's part in it, 'The Complaint of Buckingham,' and the 'Induction' (or Introduction)

¹ Edwards became master of the Queen's Chapel in 1561, and a little later produced his rimed play of 'Damon and Pythias,' a mixture of comedy and tragedy, containing some pretty verses.

² Jasper Heywood (1535-98) was a son of John Heywood. He translated Seneca's 'Troas,' 'Thyestes,' and 'Hercules Furens' into English verse (1560-61), a work in which he was followed by Alexander Neville, John Studley, Thomas Nuce, and Thomas Newton, the last of whom completed the translations of all Seneca's plays in 1580-81.

³ Gascoigne's co-worker in 'Jocasta.'

thereto. In this 'Induction' Sackville figures himself as musing on a desolate winter's day in a desolate wintry scene on

'Such fall of peers as in this realm had been,
That oft I wished some would their woes describe,
To warn the rest whom fortune left alive.'

Straightway he beholds the dreary figure of Sorrow herself, who tells her 'fearful tale,' and guides him to the 'grisly lake, and thence unto the blissful place of rest,' where he is to see the mighty dead, and hear them bewail their fate. In stanzas which are alike remarkable for their gloomy power and majestic poetry, the poet describes his descent 'within the porch and jaws of hell.' The following two stanzas (perhaps the best, but not much above the level of the whole) may give the student some idea of Sackville's genius; they describe one of the many figures he saw on his way to 'the horror and the hell, the large great kingdoms, and the dreadful reign of Pluto':

'By him (Care) lay heavy Sleep, the cousin of Death
Flat on the ground, and still as any stone,
A very corpse, save yielding forth a breath.
Small keep took he whom Fortune frowned on,
Or whom she lifted up into the throne
Of high renown; but as a living death,
So dead alive, of life he drew the breath.

The body's rest, the quiet of the heart,
The travail's ease, the still night's *ferc* ¹ was he,
And of our life on earth the better part;
Reaver of sight, and yet in whom we see
Things oft that tide, and oft that never be;
Without respect, esteeming equally
King Croesus' pomp and Irus' poverty.'

The student who is inclined to impute the main part of the poverty of earlier Tudor poetry to its over-allegorical characteristics will check his hasty judgment when he calls to mind the fact that Sackville's machinery is that also of Hawes. The former, it is true, is far superior to the latter as a mere metrist, but this might possibly have been the case

¹ *Ik*, companion. An eminent critic who finds in Sackville 'stiffness and awkwardness of phrase, and the still imperfect sense of poetical fitness and grace,' scarcely improves this line ('*The English Poets*, vol. i.) by witting, apparently in good faith, 'the still night's *ferc* was he'!

even if Sackville had had no Wyatt and Surrey to precede him; for it is hard to see anything that he could have learned as regards the technical mastery of verse from them (or even from their models) which he could not have learned from Chaucer. But the main difference between Sackville and his predecessors in England, until we get back to Chaucer, lies in his genius: for almost every writer in verse, from Hoccleve down to Spenser, except Sackville, we have to aid our admiration or check our distaste by reminding ourselves of the conditions of literary workmanship at the time, of the then standards of taste and culture, and so forth; but with Sackville's 'Induction' this is not so. If we knew nothing of its date or authorship, if we believed it to have been written before Chaucer or after Milton, we should still be forced to admire it as much as ever; we admire it without any 'considering the standards of his age,' etc.; we admire it mainly for those qualities it has which lift us above and beyond any such considerations; but to admit this is surely to admit that the 'Induction' has at least one of the marks of the supreme in art.

We have little more to say of Sackville's work here; at the end of the 'Induction,' when Sorrow has guided him to the abode of 'Princes of renown, that whilom sat on top of Fortune's wheel,' the poet meets Henry, Duke of Buckingham—'the petty rebel, dull-brain'd Buckingham' of Shakespeare's 'Richard III.'—who proceeds to tell his doleful 'Complaint,' the story of his death. This and the 'Induction' are Sackville's part in the 'Mirror.' The former is an excellent poem, but not on the whole of nearly such high merit as the other.¹

¹ The estimate of Sackville's genius given above may seem to some so exaggerated or so inadequate that it may be well to give here the dictum of Hallam, who cannot be accused of a want of sobriety in his critical judgments:

'The "Induction" displays best his poetical genius; it is, like much earlier poetry, a representation of allegorical personages, but with a fertility of imagination, vividness of description, and strength of language, which not only leave his predecessors far behind, but may fairly be compared with some of the most poetical passages in Spenser. Sackville's "Induction" forms a link which unites the school of Chaucer and Lydgate to the "Fairy Queen." It would certainly be vain to look in Chaucer, wherever Chaucer is original, for the grand creations of Sackville's fancy, yet we should never find anyone who would rate Sackville above Chaucer. The strength of an eagle is not to be measured only by the height of his place, but by the time that he continues on the wing. Sackville's "Induction" consists of a few hundred lines; and even in these there is a monotony of gloom and sorrow which prevents us from wishing it to be longer. It is truly

Let us now give some account of the work of which Sackville's 'Induction' forms a part. 'The Mirror for Magistrates,' designed by George Ferrers, Master of the Revels, was to consist of a number of poems, each relating the fall, or 'tragedy,' as it was called, of some great personage in English history.¹ Such a design accorded well with the gloomy nature of Sackville's genius, which inclined him to contemplate with sympathy, if not with pleasure, the workings of vicissitude. It is to be regretted that but the small portions of the work already discussed are his, the rest being executed by mere mechanical story-tellers in verse, whose names may be just mentioned. Among these are William Baldwin, whom Ferrers procured to carry out his design, and who contributed fourteen of the original twenty 'tragedies' (1559), Ferrers himself, who contributed three, Thomas Phaer,² John Dolman, and Churchyard.³

We pass from the Baldwins and Ferrers to a more interesting writer—Gascoigne. He, it is true, does not approach to anything like genius, but the experimental boldness and the variety of his works make him in a way the best representative man of letters of the earlier part of Elizabeth's reign: a writer

styled by Campbell a landscape on which the sun never shines. Chaucer is various, flexible, and observant of all things in outward nature, or in the heart of man. But Sackville is far above the frigid elegance of Surrey, and in the first days of Elizabeth's reign is the herald of that splendour in which it was to close.

The work was an imitation, or rather a continuation, of Lydgate's 'Falls of Princes,' itself an adaptation (from a French version) of Boccaccio's 'De Casibus Illustrium Virorum.' Lydgate seems to have been stirred up to write his version by the example of his master Chaucer, who 'made full piteous tragedies' in one of the *Canterbury Tales* described in the MS. as the 'The Monk's Tale, *de Casibus Virorum Illustrium*.' The first edition of the 'Mirror' had been begun, but prohibited, before Elizabeth's accession, and did not appear till 1559; the second edition, largely augmented, in 1563 (it was in this that Sackville's work first appeared); after this there were frequent editions, additions, supplements and imitations, and at least one prose version during Elizabeth's reign.

* Phaer also translated the greater part of the 'Aeneid' into riming 'fourteeners.' His work, which was left unfinished at his death in 1560, was completed by Thomas Twyne a few years later.

* A poem on the death of Edward IV. (ascribed to Skelton) was included in the series. A 'First Part of the Mirror for Magistrates,' written by John Higgins, was published in 1574; its name is explained by the fact that it dealt with 'magistrates' prior to those of Baldwin's 'Mirror': Higgins is a very poor creature, and was foolish enough to open with an 'Induction' which reads like a feeble burlesque of Sackville.

and translator of prose and of plays,¹ and of many forms of verse, he excels, perhaps, in nothing, but he shows ability in almost everything he tried.

Gascoigne's chief work is 'The Steel Glass' (1576), a satire in blank verse, of which the following may serve as a specimen, while it explains the meaning of the title :

'Lucilius this worthy man was named,
Who at his death bequeathed the Crystal Glass
To such as love to seem, but not to be ;
And unto those that love to see themselves,
How foul or fair soever that they are,
He gan bequeath a Glass of trusty Steel,
Wherein they may be bold alway to look,
Because it shows all things in their degree.
And since myself, now pride of youth is past,
Do love to be, and let all seeming pass,
Since I desire to see myself indeed,
Not what I would, but what I am or should,
Therefore I like this trusty Glass of Steel'—

and so on for over eleven hundred lines. It must be admitted that Gascoigne's blank verse is painfully mechanical stuff; but of course we must remember that he is handling a metre almost unknown in England; nevertheless, he does not use it nearly so successfully as Grimald or Surrey.² It is in riming metres and in shorter poems that Gascoigne's talents are seen to better advantage: in several of his poems (notably in the 'Arraignment of a Lover') he shows a delicate fancy and a command over a pretty metre which entitle him to be called a poet, though but a minor one. The reader will like these three stanzas from a set of verses in Gascoigne's daintiest manner. 'The

¹ 'He is the author of our earliest extant comedy in prose—possibly the earliest written—"The Supposes," a translation of Ariosto's "Suppositi," and in part the author of one of our earliest tragedies, "Jocasta"—a paraphrase, rather than a translation, of the "Phoinissai" of Euripides: he is one of our earliest writers of formal satire and of blank verse, and in his "Certain Notes of Instruction concerning the making of Verse or Rime in English" one of the earliest essayists, if not the earliest, on English metres' (Professor Hales: 'English Poets'). For some account of Gascoigne's dramatic work see chap. xi. We may add to the list of 'firsts' with which Gascoigne is credited the earliest known version of an Italian novel in English—"The Story of Ferdinando Jeronimo," from Bandoello.

² Observe the way in which Gascoigne's lines all end with a pause in the sense; such lines are technically called 'stopped,' and produce an overpowering sense of weariness after a time. The blank verse line, as Gascoigne writes it, is for the most part made up of five iambs, which makes his verse even more monotonous than it would otherwise be.

Lullaby' is the name of the song, and *lusisti satis* its theme :

'Sing lullabies, as women do,
With which they charm their babes to rest.
And lullaby can I sing too,
As womanly as can the best.
With lullaby they still the child,
And if I be not much beguiled,
Full many wanton babes have I
Which must be stilled with lullaby.

First lullaby my youthful years,
It is now time to go to bed ;
For crooked age and hoary hairs
Have won the haven within mine head.
With lullaby then youth be still,
With lullaby content thy will ;
Since courage quails and comes behind,
Go sleep, and so beguile thy mind.

* * * *

Thus lullaby my youth, mine eyes,
My will, my ware, and all that was ;
I can no more delays devise,
But welcome pain, let pleasure pass.
With lullaby now take your leave,
With lullaby your pains deceive ;
And when you rise with waking eye,
Remember then this lullaby.'

Gascoigne was adventurer and scholar,¹ and tried his hand at translations and adaptations of various kinds and from various tongues ; so, too, did George Turberville and Barnaby Googe.

Turberville, like Gascoigne, experimented in various kinds of compositions—translations in prose, rime, and blank verse, original compositions, etc. George Turberville, 1530?—1600? His 'Heroical Epistles of Ovid' and his 'Eclogues of Mantuan'² are said to have some merit. As one of the early translators of the Italian novels, which the

¹ 'Tam Marti quam Mercurio' is his motto. 'The Stool Glass' was dedicated to his patron, Lord Grey de Wilton, who was also Spenser's friend.

² The translations from Ovid and Mantuan appeared in 1567. Part of Ovid's 'Metamorphoses,' translated into English verse, had been published two or three years earlier : this was the work of Arthur Golding (died 1560), who subsequently completed the translation of the whole of the 'Metamorphoses.' Baptista Mantuanus (1448—1516) was a writer of Latin eclogues, on the Virgilian model, whose works were very popular in the sixteenth century.

dramatists a little later so freely used, he deserves some mention.

Googe was also a maker of various translations from Latin, Italian and Spanish. Some of his shorter original pieces are not without merit; but more notable are his 'Eclogues' (1563), a set of pastoral poems of the kind which we have now to consider in connection with the 'Shepherd's Calendar,' and which may have had some influence on the author of it.

The date of Edmund Spenser's birth is inferred, from his sixtieth sonnet, to be 1552. Educated at Merchant Taylors' School in London (his native city), and at Pembroke Hall, Cambridge,¹ his first work of note, 'The Shepherd's Calendar,' appeared in the year 1579, soon after his return to London from a sojourn in the north. It was dedicated to Sir Philip Sidney, with whom he had formed a friendship, probably through the introduction of their joint friend, Gabriel Harvey,² and through whom he became acquainted with Sidney's uncle, the powerful Earl of Leicester. In 1580³

¹ Now Pembroke College.

² Harvey was a lecturer at Pembroke and Trinity Hall. He made various attempts at literature, both in Latin and English, which are of very little value. His friendship with Spenser, however, and the correspondence between them that has been preserved, make him a person of considerable interest in connection with the poet. He was a good scholar and a diligent if pedantic student; he was one of the most active of the knot of 'reformers' of English verse who appear about this period. The reformers wished to graft upon English verse classic metres and (what was far more ridiculous) classic methods which regarded quantity solely, and not accent, as the basis of rhythm: there was a fashion for the thing at the time—a fashion that originated in the natural dissatisfaction of men, who could read the classics and the Italians, when they turned to the feeble productions of contemporary English verse. Spenser and Sidney (to mention two great poets) were caught by it for awhile, and experiments of each of them in the 'artificial versifying' are extant. Later in life Harvey, involved in disputes with very much acuter writers than himself, was mercilessly scoffed at for the tortures he had inflicted on his native tongue; but at the time we write of he was respected and beloved by his friends for 'his rare gifts of learning,' his 'gallant English verses,' and his taste and culture. Sidney's best work begins just after the close of this period; a little masque, 'The Lady of May,' and some small experiments and translations, alone belong to it.

³ The 'Fairy Queen' was already begun, as we know from a letter of Harvey's, in April 1580. How much of it was written is, however, utterly unknown: the first three books did not appear till ten years later. Of Spenser's other work before 1580 (besides the 'Shepherd's Calendar') we know that the bulk of what were afterwards published as the 'Visions of Bellay' and the 'Visions of Petrarch' (two short series of sonnets in the volume of 'Complaints') had been written by him in their first form in or before his seventeenth year. Other works (some perhaps never finished, some destroyed or lost, and some perhaps worked up into some of his

Spenser was appointed Secretary to Lord Grey de Wilton, who took him in that year to Ireland, where, for the present, we leave him.

'Now, as touching the general drift and purpose of his *Æglogues*,¹ I mind not to say much, him-
The
'Shepherd's
Calendar.'
 self labouring to conceal it,' says Master 'E. K.' 'Only this appeareth, that his unstaid youth had long wandered in the common labyrinth of love, in which time to mitigate and allay the heat of his passion, or else to warn (as he saith) the young shepherds, his equals and companions, of his unfortunate folly, he compiled these twelve *Æglogues*, which, for that they be proportioned to the state of the twelve months, he termeth the "*Shepherd's Calendar*," applying an old name to a new work.' The 'pastoral' form which Spenser adopts had, as we have seen, been but little used by former English poets. Googe, as we know, had used it not long before Spenser, while Barclay and Turberville had made translations, *etc.* On the genesis of the Elizabethan pastoral a very few words will suffice. It was one of the forms of writing whose transplantation to England was mainly due to the Renaissance and contact with Italy. Petrarch, in the fourteenth century, had imitated in Latin the *Pastorals* of Virgil, much as Virgil had imitated Theocritus. In the next century writers of pastorals in Italian as well as in Latin are more popular, notable among them being 'good old Mantuan.' The pastoral writers of the end of the fifteenth and the beginning of the sixteenth century increase in number and value; in Italy Sannazzaro (1458—1532) is the most prominent name; in Spain (under Italian influence), Garcilaso (1503-36); in France, Clément Marot (1497—1544), whom Spenser admired, translated,

known poems) which we hear of in or before 1580, are 'Drems, 'Legends, 'Court of Cupid,' 'Stemmata Duddelann,' 'Slumber,' 'Epithalamion Thamesis,' 'Dyng Feloon,' and nine comedies. We only know of them from 'E. K.'s' introduction to the '*Shepherd's Calendar*,' and from the correspondence that has been preserved between Harvey and Spenser.

'E. K.' spells it thus, deriving the word (indirectly) from αἴων or αἰωνόμαρ, αἰών—that is, 'Gothorda's tales.' This 'E. K.' was a close friend of Spenser's and supervised the first edition of the '*Shepherd's Calendar*,' to which he added a 'Gloss,' or commentary and introductions; he is generally identified with his college friend, E. Kirke. Some, however, have maintained that 'E. K.' was the poet himself.

imitated, and perhaps did not excel.¹ The 'Shepherd's Calendar' is a work which the student will study for himself: it is, perhaps, permissible to a reader who can make use of such a text-book as this to obtain his knowledge of Hawes or Gascoigne (to say nothing of less significant names) at second-hand, but his Spenser he must know, and know well, before he imagines he has any acquaintance with English literature. To give a few notes, such as may be useful to read before studying the eclogues, is all that is attempted here. The *language* of the poem, it will be observed, is purposely archaic. Spenser 'laboured to restore, as to their rightful heritage, such good and natural English words as have been long time out of use and almost clean disherited,' says 'E. K.' The poet was a lover and diligent student of Chaucer ('The God of shepherds, Tityrus,' in Eclogue vi.), and got many of his old words from him; others, perhaps, from his residence in the north, or from a study of northern poets, for his diction abounds in distinctively northern forms; so fond is he of what seem to him quaint or rustic words, that a certain number of them are apparently of his own invention; to a certain extent, indeed, his language is a highly artificial one, for he has pieced it out from different dialects, and selected constructions and phrases which date from different stages of the language. Whether this be a blemish or not, it was not wholly approved by his own contemporaries;² but the student will bear in mind that Spenser's object, both in construction of his poems and choice of diction, etc., was to present a more vivid semblance of 'goatherds' songs.' The proper names Spenser uses are typical of his diction in many ways: from classic sources we have Tityrus and Pan, Syrinx (Anne Bullen), Dido and Menalcas, the first two of whom serve as a kind of 'trade mark' of the pastoral; rustic or pseudo-rustic life gives us Piers, Cuddie, Diggon Davie,

¹ On Eclogue 1. (January) of the 'Shepherd's Calendar' 'E. K.' remarks: 'The word Colin is French, and used of the French poet Marot, *if he be worthy of the name of a poet.*' That alone is surely enough to make the theory that 'E. K.' was Spenser utterly untenable.

² 'The "Shepherd's Calendar" hath much poesy in his eclogues, indeed worthy the reading, if I be not deceived. That same framing of his style to an old rustic language I dare not allow; since neither Theocritus in Greek, nor Virgil in Latin, nor Sannazzaro in Italian, did affect it' (Sidney's 'Apology for Poetry,' about 1581).

Lobbin, Hobbinoll (Harvey), and part of Colin Clout¹ (Spenser); Thenot is due to Marot; Elisa is shortened for the Queen's name; Morrell (Bishop Elmor or Aylmer), Algrind (Archbishop Grindal), and Rosalind (the unidentified 'widow's daughter of the glen'), are anagrams. Similarly, the eclogues show as much variety as possible of style, metre, and inspiration. January, for instance, is a plaintive song of Colin Clout, who bewails Rosalind's scorn of his love; the metre is a decasyllabic, riming six-lined stanza (*ababcc*). In February we have a humorous dialogue (between Cuddie and Thenot) in rough, riming couplets, containing the story of 'The Oak and the Briar,' somewhat in Chaucer's manner. March ('Willie and Thomalin') has a pretty description of the shooting of 'the winged lad,' written in a tripping six-line metre (*aabccb*) and 'seemeth somewhat to resemble . . . Theocritus.' April ('Thenot and Hobbinoll') abounds with classic allusions, and is elaborately artificial in metre and diction; it contains the beautiful 'song which Colin made in honour of her Majesty, whom abruptly he termeth Elisa,' and is one of the best of the collection. May ('Palinode and Piers') shows Spenser (following Marot's example) as champion of the Reformed Church. In June we have a continuation of January; Rosalind has preferred Menalcas to Colin, and the latter pours out his lament in tuneful eight-lined stanzas (*ababbaba*) to the devoted Hobbinoll. July ('Thomalin and Morrell') is another religious pastoral, in which Spenser commends 'good shepherds' (such as Grindal, then in disgrace), as contrasted with 'goatherds proud,' like Morrell (Aylmer); this time a four-lined stanza (*abab*) of alternate eight-syllable and six-syllable lines is used. August will remind 'every schoolboy' of Virgil, who here imitated Theocritus: Willie and Perigot dispute for the supremacy in song, and Cuddie acts as umpire. In September 'Diggon Davie' (who is said to be Vander Noodt, the Protestant refugee, who published Spenser's 'Visions' in his 'Theatre of Worldlings') describes to Hobbinoll (in couplets) the wickedness of Roman prelates. In October ('Cuddie and Piers') we have the 'perfect

¹ Skelton's pseudonym.

pattern of a poet,' an imitation of Theocritus in a stately measure:

'O, peerless Poesie ! where is then thy place ?
 If nor in Prince's palace thou dost sit,
 (And yet is Prince's palace thee most fit,)
 Nor breast of baser birth doth thee embrace,
 Then make thee wings of thine aspiring wit,
 And, whence thou cam'st, fly back to heaven apace.'

November ('Thenot and Colin'—the lament for 'Dido') and December ('Colin's Complaint') are modelled on, and in part almost literally translated from, Marot.

The variety of the metres employed in the 'Shepherd's Calendar' has been dwelt on because it seems that Spenser was trying his hand at various forms of verse, and partly showing what he could not do, as well as what he was destined to accomplish. Taken as a whole, the work seems generally to be considered to be a masterpiece, though no one will deny that some portions are poor; but whether we agree with those critics who maintain that, had Spenser written nothing else, the 'Shepherd's Calendar' would entitle him to a place among the great English poets, or whether we consider it chiefly valuable as being the early work of the author of the 'Fairy Queen,' we shall not fail to recognise in it passages of striking sweetness and melody, and (more rarely) of dignity and stateliness, nor to acknowledge the command over the harmonies of verse that its author possessed; nor shall we forget that it gained him the title of the 'new poet,' and that its publication marks the beginning of the great age of Elizabethan poetry.

CHAPTER X.

PROSE FROM MORE TO LILY (1500—1579 A.D.).

THERE is as good reason for making the year 1579 our halting year in prose as in poetry; for while, on the one hand, it is the year of the 'Shepherd's Calendar,' which heralded the advent of the long-expected poet, it is also the year of Lyly's 'Euphues,' of North's 'Plutarch,' and—last and least—of Gosson's 'School of Abuse.' Lyly's 'Euphues' set almost as momentous and vicious an example for Elizabethan prose as the 'Shepherd's Calendar' set a momentous and virtuous example for Elizabethan poetry.

Sixteenth-century prose begins with Sir Thomas More, who was the son of Sir John More, a judge of the Court of King's Bench; he was taken in his youth as a page into the household of Cardinal Morton, the then lord chancellor, and subsequently educated at Oxford. Erasmus, whose close friend he became, mentions him as early as 1497 as a young man of especially remarkable gifts.¹ After leaving Oxford More studied law, entered Parliament, held various public appointments, and on the fall of Wolsey became chancellor (1529). A sturdy champion of the Roman Church, and unable to approve the King's action in ecclesiastical matters, he ceased to be chancellor in 1532; in 1535 he was executed.

The most famous of More's writings is his 'Utopia.' This, the only literary work which the general reader is apt to associate with his name, was unfortunately written by its author in *Latin*, so that it has little title to a place

¹ 'Thomas Mori ingenio quid unquam finxit natura vel mollius, vel dulcius vel felicius?' says Erasmus, Ep. xiv., December 5, 1497 (quoted by Hallam).

in an elementary treatise on the history of our literature, which must necessarily deal with form and style rather than with subject-matter. Nevertheless, 'Utopia' is too full of interest in other respects to be passed over with a mere mention, for it is the typical product of the early New Learning. The following is a brief analysis of the work.¹ In the beginning of the first book More narrates how he was sent as ambassador to Flanders in company with Cuthbert Tunstall. At Antwerp his friend Peter Giles—better known by his Latin name of Aegidius—introduced him to 'a certain stranger, a man well stricken in age, with a black, sunburnt face, a long beard, and a coat cast homely about his shoulders, whom by his savour and apparel forthwith I judged to be a mariner.' This man was a Portuguese traveller—'and one well learned in the Latin tongue, but profound in the Greek'—whose name was Raphael Hythloday.² He had joined 'Amerigo Vespucci, and in the three last of those four voyages *that be now in print and abroad in every man's hands*, he continued still in his company, save that in the last voyage he came not home again with him,'³ for he got leave to stay and explore the country with some of his companions. Hythloday, in conversation with More and Giles, touches on 'divers things that be amiss, some here and some there,' and expresses himself as a man of profound experience and knowledge. In answer to questions of More as to whether he had 'ever been in our country,' Hythloday gave an account of his stay in England, and of a conversation at Cardinal Morton's⁴ dinner-table. In this conversation some of the chief questions of the time are discussed, and it is

¹ It was written in 1515 and 1516, and first published at Louvain at the end of the latter year. It was not translated into English till long after the author's death, the earliest version being that by Ralph Robinson, 1551, from which our extracts are taken.

² Gk. ὕλησις = idle talk, nonsense, and δεινός = knowing, cunning.

³ The voyages were in 1497, 1498, 1501, 1503: the words in italics above bear witness to the widespread interest felt in the discoveries of the New World.

⁴ About 1485. The description of his old master which More puts into Hythloday's mouth is worth quoting: '[He was] a man not more honourable for his authority than for his prudence and virtue. In his face did shine such an amiable reverence as was pleasant to behold; gentle in communication, yet earnest and sage. . . . In his speech he was fine, eloquent, and pithy. In the law he had profound knowledge, in wit he was incomparable, and in memory wonderful excellent. These qualities, which in him were by nature singular, he by learning and use had made perfect. The King put much trust in his counsel, the weal public also in a

evident that More's sympathies are in favour of what we now consider the more 'civilised' solutions. Hythloday inveighs against the hanging of thieves, who would not for the most part be thieves if they had but the means of getting an honest living; against the luxury and extortion of landlords; against the turning of 'whole fields, houses, and cities' into sheep-runs, thus depriving husbandmen of their labour; against the practices of 'ingrossing' and 'forestalling,' which cause such dearth and high prices of victuals; and so on. After narrating this conversation to More, he goes on to answer Giles's suggestion that he should bestow the benefit of his experience and learning on some king. Hythloday shows him of how little account the most honest and good advice is at court: 'If so be that I should speak those things that Plato feigneth in his weal public, or that the *Utopians* do in theirs, these things they were better, yet they might seem spoken out of place.' Then, at the persuasion of his friends, he gives them a description of the manners and customs of Utopia, which occupies the second book. Utopia was the land which Hythloday found on his last journey mentioned above. In it none of the abuses exist which More finds in the England of his days; justice, religious toleration, education, learning, and the arts, flourish; idleness is unknown, and crime rare; money and precious stones are of little account; hunting is looked on as the 'most abject part of butchery,' and war is never engaged in by the Utopians—Utopia meaning, be it remembered, 'Nowhere.'¹ More tells his story with much grave humour and sedate fancy, and with a grace of expression and delicate picturesqueness of style which make it the greater pity that he did not write it in his own language.²

manner leaned unto him. For even in the chief of his youth he was taken from school into the court, and there passed all his time in much trouble and business, being continually tumbled and tossed in the waves of divers misfortunes and adversities. And so by many and great dangers he learned the experience of the world, which so being learned cannot easily be forgotten.

¹ *ou* (not) and *topos* (place). More observes that the island was named from a certain king, Utopus.

² Owing to the Conquest, a certain discredit rested for generations on England's original language. Long after an English nation, rich in every sort of glory, had come into being, writers are to be found hesitating to use the national idiom. This circumstance is chiefly noticeable in prose, where the use of a foreign tongue offers less difficulties than in poetry. Prose was less cultivated in England even so late as the commencement of the sixteenth century than in France during the thirteenth. . . . A hundred years later something of this want of confidence in the

'His romance exhibits infinite resources of spirit and animation,' says M. Jusserand; 'of all his writings, it is the one that best justifies his great reputation for wit and enlightenment. His characters are living men, and their conversation undoubtedly resembles that which delighted him in the society of his friend Erasmus.'

It is not, however, merely as a Latinist that More claims our notice here, for though he has no claim to rank among remarkable stylists in English, yet there is much that is of interest in the manner as well as the matter of his English prose works. Of these latter, one of the earliest is the 'History of the Life and Death of Edward V. . . and of Richard III.,' probably written shortly before the close of Henry VII.'s reign: it is usually considered the first good bit of historical writing in English,¹ and has been highly praised by Hallam as

future of English prose still lingered. Bacon, after having employed it in his essays and treatises, was seized with anxiety, and kept in his pay secretaries with whose help he meant to translate all his works into Latin, in order to assure himself of their permanence' (Jusserand: 'The English Novel in the Time of Shakespeare,' Miss Lee's translation). It may be added that until the seventeenth century there was little translation into Continental tongues from English itself, a language almost unknown abroad; it was therefore absolutely necessary for an author who wished to have his works appreciated by foreign readers to express him self in Latin, the universal language of the cultured. No doubt, too, the superstitious reverence with which the classic tongues were regarded had something to do with its employment; but we shall find the sixteenth-century writers using English freely enough in works meant for 'home consumption.' Compare the extracts from Ascham and Mulcaster, on p. 181.

¹ This is, perhaps, a convenient place for a note on the historians, translators, compilers, etc., of the period, with whom it is unnecessary to cumber the text of the narrative: the only historical writer in English before More who need be mentioned is

Robert Fabyan (died 1512), who wrote a 'Concordance of [English] Histories,' a chronicle which extends from the mythic Brut down to the end of the fifteenth century: the bulk of the work (compiled from earlier Latin and French chronicles) is of little value; but on the details of contemporary affairs, and especially in matters connected with the City of London (of which he had been alderman and sheriff), he is said to be trustworthy.

More's 'Edward V.' (which was written under the influence of, and perhaps partly at the dictation of, Cardinal Morton) was followed by Hall's History of the 'Union of the two Noble and Illustrious Families of Lancaster and York.' Its author, Edward Hall (1590-47), made use of More's work, and incorporated some of it with his own. Hall's work has a special interest for the student, as being one of the sources of Shakespeare's historical plays.

John Bouchier, Lord Berners (1470?-1532), began to work at a translation of Froissart's Chronicles about 1520; his style is quaint and fantastic, but clear, vivid and direct, and shows a remarkable advance on the manner of writing of a decade or two earlier. Berners was a good scholar, and translated other works from French, Spanish, etc., besides producing some original compositions.

John Bellenden (Ballantyne) produced a 'History of Scotland' in 1530, a translation from the Latin 'History of Scotland' by Hector Boyce or Boece (1470?—

'the first example of good English language; pure and perspicuous, well chosen, without vulgarisms and pedantry.' In the Reformation struggle, More championed the anti-Lutheran cause by his writings as well as by the part he took in politics. His 'Dialogue concerning Heresies' (about 1529) and his 'Confutation of Tyndale's Answer' are good specimens of the mass of argumentative polemic matter he produced.

Tyndale, who had received an Oxford education, early sympathised with the Lutheran opinions, by reason of which he seems to have been obliged to quit England in 1523, when he took up his quarters at Hamburg. He had begun his translation of the New Testament in England, and now got parts of it clandestinely printed (1524-25), but difficulties in connection with it drove him from place to place: however, in 1525 he had an edition printed at Cologne, and endeavoured to get copies of it into England. He then turned to the Old Testament, publishing the English of the Pentateuch (printed at Marburg) in 1530, and subsequently revising the earlier editions of his New Testament. His pious labours and perilous wanderings were ended by a martyr's death.

Tyndale's greatest work is the translation of the New Testament, etc., spoken of above: it is impossible to give it higher praise than to say that it is scarcely surpassed in grandeur, melody, and feeling, by the Authorised Version itself, and, indeed, that stately storehouse of rhythmic prose owes very much to Tyndale. Tyndale, in turn, is largely (but not nearly so largely) indebted to Luther's version. Among the best of his works as a writer on religion and a

1536); this translation is said to be the first specimen of Scotch literary prose.

Beelden also translated parts of *Livy* and wrote original verse.

George Cavendish (1500-82), who was gentleman-usher to Wolsey, wrote a life of the great cardinal, which we may mention here as belonging for all practical purposes to Henry VIII.'s reign, though internal evidence fixes the actual date of the writing of it (or some of it) at 1554. Cavendish's 'Life' was later incorporated by Holinshed and is the basis of a large part of Shakespeare's 'Henry VIII.' Shakespeare may have seen it in MS. It was not printed until 1641.

John Leland (1506?-1552) compiled in the latter part of Henry VIII.'s reign an 'Itinerary,' or account of journeys into every part of England: it is a work of vast diligence, containing a very large amount of information interesting to the antiquarian and the historian.

controversialist are 'The Obedience of a Christian Man,' 'The Practise of Prelates,' and 'An Answer to Sir Thomas More's Dialogue': in these and many similar works he appears as a straightforward writer, able to express himself with great clearness and directness; they are interesting in every way, but they have none of the high literary qualities of his great translation.

Much the same is true of the man who carried to completion the work of Tyndale, and brought out ^{Coverdale, 1483?—1560.} in 1535 the whole Bible in English—Miles Coverdale, a native of Yorkshire. His translation was based on Tyndale's, the Vulgate, and the Zürich German version. His original works are little noteworthy; his share in even our present translation of the Bible is second only to Tyndale's. He was Bishop of Exeter for the two years preceding Mary's accession; then followed imprisonment, wanderings, and a precarious livelihood; but he was more fortunate, in one sense, than Tyndale, for he received a London living in 1563, and died in his native land.

'It is very rarely,' says J. M. Dodds, 'that a translation is so well done as to acquire a separate literary value of its own. If the English Bible possesses this merit in a pre-eminent degree, it is only justice to give their meed of credit to the two men whose workmanship is most largely traceable in its pages. These two men are Tyndale and Coverdale. . . . Speaking generally, it may be said that Tyndale's example secured for our version the qualities of strength and accuracy, while its grace is due to Coverdale. . . . It is said that three of Tyndale's renderings have survived for each one of Coverdale's. The task which Coverdale successfully achieved was to introduce into the English Bible that sweetness and melody, never afterwards lost—"that true concord of well-tuned sounds"—to which it owes so much of its subtle and evanescent charm of style. . . . It was the ambition of the Bible translators to provide material which (in Coverdale's words) would give better occupation than the singing of "*hey nony nony, hey trolly loly*, and such like phantasies." They succeeded even beyond their hopes. History records no more remarkable process of absorption and substitution than that by which the national heroes of

our old ballads, and the multifarious folk-lore inherited from primeval Teutonic heathenism, have made way for the alien but powerfully attractive figures and mysteries of Hebrew tradition.¹

Latimer was the son of a Leicestershire yeoman. He Hugh Latimer, was sent to Cambridge, and distinguished himself by his fervent opposition to the new religious views; but he was soon won over to them, and then became as ardent in their advocacy. In 1530 he preached before Henry VIII., and became one of the King's chaplains, and in 1535 received the bishopric of Worcester, which he resigned in 1539 on the passing of the Six Articles. He was 'commanded to silence' for the remainder of Henry VIII.'s reign, and was (or at least thought himself) in danger of execution. By Edward VI. he was taken into high favour, and to his reign many of his best sermons belong. He was burnt under Mary in 1555; his last words are said to have been an exhortation to his fellow-martyr Ridley: 'Be of good comfort, Master Ridley, and play the man: we shall this day light such a candle, by God's grace, in England, as I trust shall never be put out.'

Latimer's sermons are remarkable for the vigour and boldness with which he speaks out against the abuses of his day, and, preaching before King and court, he does

¹ The Bibles of Henry VIII.'s reign are:

(a) The version of the New Testament, the Pentateuch, etc., by Tyndale, 1525-30.

(b) A complete version of the whole Bible, by Miles Coverdale, which appeared in 1536, practically incorporating Tyndale's version, with additional translation (but not from the original languages) of the parts not done by him.

(c) *Matthe's* (or Rogers') *Bible*, 1537, "set forth with the king's most gracious licence," was no more than a revised version of Tyndale's and Coverdale's.

(d) *The 'Great,' or Cromwell's, Bible*, so called from its being issued under the auspices of Thomas Cromwell in 1539; it was the work of Coverdale, 'truly translated after the verity of the Hebrew and Greek texts by the diligent study of divers excellent learned men, expert in the foresaid tongues,' and was based on his earlier edition.

(e) In 1540 appeared the so-called *Cranmer's Bible*, with a 'prologue' written by the Archbishop. In reality it was only a second edition of the 'Great' Bible, and was, like it, prepared by Coverdale. The Prayer-Book version of the Psalms is taken from this.

In the early years of Elizabeth's reign two famous Bibles appeared, viz.:

(a) *The Geneva Bible* (1560), the work of English Protestants—e.g., Coverdale, Gilby, Whittingham, etc.—who had fled from the Marian persecutions. This was issued with annotations which, being of a severely Calvinistic nature, made the version long a favourite with English Puritans and Scotch Presbyterians. It is the first version divided into verses.

(b) *The Bishops' Bible* (1568), which was translated, under the superintendence of Archbishop Parker, by several bishops, and was the official Church of England version until the Authorized Version of 1611.

not hesitate to inveigh against their shortcomings, and to bid them mend their ways. He has a genius for delivering telling illustrations, a great command over language, and a most vivacious and spirited humour; we feel when we read him that he must have been a great orator, and his sentences have about them the declamatory ring that leaves upon the reader an impression of cadence and something like rhythm which he gets from little other prose of the day.

It was natural to pass direct from Tyndale and Coverdale to Latimer; but we must return for a moment to Sir Thomas Elyot, a writer of good birth and education, who serves as another example of the wide culture and erudition of Henry VIII.'s court. He held many civil and diplomatic appointments, for several of which he appears to have been none too well paid. His chief work, 'The Book named the Governour,' 1531, a treatise on the education of statesmen, was dedicated to Henry VIII. Its two-fold object was 'to instruct men in such virtues as should be expedient for them which should have authority in a weal public, and to educate those youths that hereafter may be deemed worthy to be governors.' Besides eleven other works, Elyot is notable as the compiler of the first Latin-English Dictionary. 'That he should have written all his books in his native language gives him a high place among the pioneers of English prose literature. His style is clear, although its literary flavour is thin.'

Ascham is the typical representative of the younger generation of the New Learning. Educated at Roger Ascham, 1515-63. St. John's College, Cambridge—he was elected to a fellowship in 1534—he threw himself with enthusiasm into the study of the classics, and has a place among the earlier teachers of Greek, which he had learned first from his contemporaries, Smith and Okeke. He was tutor to three sovereigns—Edward VI., Mary, and Elizabeth—and was highly respected and honoured for his learning and amiable disposition. Like most of the scholars of his own age, he was a Protestant; but, nevertheless, Mary (his pupil), on her accession to the throne, increased the pension granted to him by her father, and it was continued in the next reign until his death. Ascham's chief English writings are

'Toxophilus,' published in 1545, and 'The Schoolmaster,' published in 1570 by his widow.

'Toxophilus' and 'The Schoolmaster' will be found rather disappointing books to read, if the student has formed any estimate of them based on Ascham's reputation as a man of letters. The subject-matter of neither of them is of great interest, and considerable gift of literary expression or marked signs of anything more than moderate talent and distinguished scholarship are not very evident. We must remember, however, that Ascham is among the earliest writers¹ of any note to use prose for purposes not merely controversial or declamatory, and that, considering the extreme scarcity of anything like good models of English prose before he wrote, we must not deny him credit for his plain, careful, and lucid writing, rigid and lacking in harmony as it is. 'Toxophilus,' dialogues between a book-lover (Philologus) and an amateur archer (Toxophilus), in which Ascham dwells on the advantages of the bow as the national weapon (which it was fast ceasing to be), the fit implement for the student's exercise, the foe to unmanly and immoral games; etc., has a preface in which occurs the following passage, which is a fair specimen of Ascham's style, and will impress on the student's memory the chief ground for the high estimation in which Ascham stands—his use of English at a time when, both as scholar and man of culture, it would have been, as he says, 'more profitable for my study and also more honest for my name' to write Latin :

'If any man would blame me, either for taking such a matter in hand, or else for writing it in the English tongue, this answer I may make him, that when the best of the realm think it honest for them to use, I, one of the meanest sort, ought not to suppose it vile for me to write; and though to have written it in another tongue had been both more profitable for my study, and also more honest for my name, yet I can think my labour well bestowed, if with a little hindrance of my profit and name, may come any furtherance to the pleasure or commodity of the gentlemen and yeomen of England, for whose sake I took this matter in hand. . . . *And as for the Latin and Greek tongue every thing is so excellently done in them that no man can do better; in the English tongue, contrary, every thing in a manner so meanly both for the matter and handling, that no man can do worse.*

¹ More's 'History of Richard III.' was not published till 1557; Elyot's style however, does not suffer by comparison with Ascham's.

For therein the least learned, for the most part, have been always most ready to write. And they which had least hope in Latin have been most bold in English: when surely every man that is most ready to talk is not most able to write. He that will write well in any tongue must follow this judgment of Aristotle, to speak as the common people do, to think as wise men do. . . . Many English writers have not done so, but using strange words, as Latin, French, and Italian, do make all things dark and hard.¹

In 'Toxophilus' there are frequent digressions upon morals, as there are in 'The Schoolmaster,' a book which deals with the education of children and the teaching and study of Latin. Ascham's kindly views as to impropriety of brutal treatment, and the advantages of training them by love rather than fear, are set forth, and show him in a very pleasant light, while his ideas about the method of teaching languages are extremely sensible. In the course of the book he inveighs against the practice of young Englishmen of wealth travelling in Italy—a point on which his advice had been asked by Sir Richard Sackville, by whose encouragement the book was written—a custom which Lyly's 'Euphues,' of which we are about to treat, enlarges against. The name 'Euphues,'² and the section of the book which deals with education ('Euphues and his Ephebus'), were also suggested by 'The Schoolmaster.'

Thomas Wilson, who published an 'Art of Rhetoric' (i.e., 'A Handbook of English Composition') in 1553, bids us take care 'that we never affect any strange ink-horn terms, but to speak as is commonly received. . . . Some,' he adds, 'seek so far for outlandish English that they forget altogether their mother's tongue . . . and yet these fine English clerks will say they speak in their mother-tongue, if a man should charge them with counterfeiting the King's English.' Wilson has more merit than that of merely protesting against affectation: he not only lays down sensible laws for English writing, but to a certain extent exemplifies them. He has more command over the language than Ascham, and his style is not so repellantly wooden. Wilson also published an 'Art of Logic,' and translated parts of Demosthenes. He died in 1581, the year preceding the appearance of a more powerful plea for the proper use of English in Richard Mulcaster's 'Elementary, a work on the education of the young: 'Is it not a marvellous bondage to become servants to one tongue for learning's sake, the most part of our time, with loss of most time; whereas we may have the very same treasure in our own tongue with gain of most time? our own bearing the joyful title of our liberty and freedom, and the Latin tongue remembering us of our thralldom and bondage? I love Rome, but London better; I favour Italy, but England more; I honour the Latin, but I worship the English. . . . I do not think that any language, be it whatsoever, is better able to utter all arguments, either with more pith or greater plainness, than our English tongue is.' Mulcaster's faith in his native tongue—cultivated classic scholar as he was—was destined to be fully justified, long before his death in 1611, by (among many others) one who had been his pupil at Merchant Taylor's—the author of 'The Faerie Queene.'

Ascham says that a child fit for proper training must be, among other things, εὐφώνος, according to 'the wisest man that learning maketh mention of . . . Socrates in Plato.'

Lyly is a person of some importance in the history of John Lyly, our literature, as being practically the first of the Elizabethan novel-writers, and having set a fashion to (or at least brought into prominence a fashion notable in) the prose-writers of his time. The scanty details of his life which are known are somewhat as follows: He was a native of Kent, and studied at Magdalen College, Oxford, where he took his degree in 1573. He spent most of his life about the court, for which his plays were written; petitions of his, seeking for pension or other reward, are extant, but whether he ever got any is unknown: his reputation, at any rate, was very great.

Lyly's chief work is 'Euphues,' i.e., 'Euphues, the Anatomy of Wit' (1579), and 'Euphues and his England' (1580)—which is described by Hallam as 'a very dull story,' and by Kingsley as 'as brave, righteous, and pious a book as a man need look into': both of these remarks seem to be perfectly true. Lyly's Euphues is a young gentleman of fortune, a native of Athens (i.e. London), who travels in Italy after the fashion so condemned in 'The Schoolmaster.' The story itself demands little attention: the book is taken up chiefly with moralisings on various subjects, in the form of discourses, letters, and exhortations on love, religion, education, etc.: these are hung on to a meagre skeleton of incident, more or less connected with Euphues' travels. In the first part we have Euphues' friendship with Philautus, and their love adventures with Lucilla, the daughter of the Governor of Naples, ending with the return of Euphues to the University of Athens; in the second part ('Euphues and his England') Euphues comes to England, bringing Philautus with him; finally he returns to Athens again to his cell at Silexedra,¹ leaving his friend happily married. Such is the matter of the book; let us look at its style—the style which attracted so much attention, and has given a word to the language. Here is a specimen in which Lyly's peculiarities are fairly well marked:

¹ Lyly's contemporaries drew Euphues out of his cell again often enough: for the next few years most of the novels of the day pretend to some connection with him.

'Thou takest it heavily that thou shouldst be accused without colour and exiled without cause; and I think thee happy to be so well rid of the court and be so void of crime. Thou sayst banishment is bitter to the free-born, and I deem it the better if thou be without blame. There be many meats which are sour in the mouth and sharp in the maw, but if thou mingle them with sweet sauces they yield both a pleasant taste and wholesome nourishment. Divers colours offend the eye, yet having green among them whet the sight. I speak this to this end, that though thy exile seem grievous to thee, yet guiding thyself with the rules of philosophy it shall be more tolerable; he that is cold doth not cover himself with care, but with clothes: he that is washed in the rain dryeth himself by the fire, not by his fancy; and thou which art banished oughtest not with tears to bewail thy hap, but with wisdom to heal thy hurt.'

The characteristics of Lyly's style are his love of antithesis, which he carries to such an extent that he seems almost unable to make the simplest statement without contrasting it with, or balancing it by, another; an inordinate fondness for similitudes and parallels drawn from mythology, biography, and the natural science of—Pliny; a delight in the repetition of the same word (often for the sake of the antithesis), and in alliteration, and other jingling ornaments. The chief merit of Lyly's style is well stated by Professor Minto:¹ 'His sentences are remarkably free from intricacy and inversion, much shorter, more pithy and direct than was usual. We must come down at least a century before we find a structure so lucid. To be sure, his matter was not heavy, and did not tempt him to use either weighty sentences or learned terms—still, credit to whom credit is due; his sentences, as sentences, though not in perfect modern form, are the most smooth and finished of that time. His chief fault is the want of variety,'—a uniformity of length and cadence in his periods, which increases the monotony produced by their obviously and mechanically artificial character. But what is known as 'Euphuism'—viz., the tricks and affectations of Lyly's style—was not invented by Lyly, for we may find indications of it in earlier writers, even as far back as Berners, and 'Euphues' itself has been regarded as modelled in style and subject on the Spanish 'Golden Book of Marcus Aurelius' of Antonio Guevara, while from Lyly's preface

¹ 'Manual of English Prose Literature,' pp. 228-29.

we know that the Italianate Englishmen of his day 'desire to hear *finer* speech than their language will allow'; but the mannerisms known as 'Euphuistic' were carried by Lyly to their highest pitch, and, indeed, we may look upon Lyly as having given death rather than birth to them, for he and his immediate imitators worked them so hard that the public and the writers very little later than Lyly grew tired of them, and would have no more. Even Lyly's merits of style (according to Professor Minto) produced no fruit: 'his lucid neatness of sentence and orderly way of producing instances perished with his worthless affectations. English style immediately after him was not less prolix and intricate, nor less overburdened with clumsy quotations.'¹

We have seen a number of translators of the classic poetry and drama at work (chap. ix.): the prose translators must also not be passed over. Chief Translators,
Chroniclers, etc. among these is Sir Thomas North, who in 1579 published a translation (from the French of Jacques Amyot, Bishop of Auxerre) of 'Plutarch's Lives'; this was Shakespeare's Plutarch—the book on which his 'Julius Caesar' and the other Roman plays were founded. 'An earlier work of North's—the "Dial of Princes," a translation of Guevara's "El Libro de Marco Aurelio," published in 1557—is still more interesting for the history of prose style. It throws strong light on the derivation of Lyly's "Euphuism." There are passages in it which might pass for Lyly's.'² Translators of the Italian novels also appear, some of whom have already been mentioned: others are William Painter, whose 'Palace of Pleasure' (1566-69) was a collection of tales from Boccaccio and Bandello, which Shakespeare³ and other Elizabethan dramatists made use of; and George Whet-

¹ Lyly's other works do not fall within the scope of this chapter; they are nine plays, chiefly in prose—'Alexander and Campaspe,' 'Endymion,' 'Mother Bomble,' etc.—written in the years 1580-90.

² Minto's 'English Prose Literature.'

³ E.g., Bandello's tales, in one form or another, contributed more or less to the plot of the following of Shakespeare's plays: 'Two Gentlemen of Verona' (Barnabe Riche, 1581), 'Romeo and Juliet' (in Painter's 'Palace of Pleasure,' and in Arthur Brooke's poem 'Romeus and Juliet,' 1592, based on the same story), 'Much Ado' (taken indirectly from a novel of Belleforest's, after Bandello; there is a similar story in Turberville's 'Genovra'), etc. See Mr. Fleay's 'Shakespeare Manual,' whence these particulars are taken.

stone, of one of whose plays, 'Promos and Cassandra,' an account is given in the next chapter. A book of another kind, which must have formed part of Shakespeare's 'library,' is Ralph Holinshed's 'Chronicles of England, Scotland, and Ireland,' which first appeared in 1577, and incorporated the work of several other writers.

CHAPTER XI.

THE TUDOR DRAMA, DOWN TO 1580.

IN chapters vii. and viii. an attempt has been made to give the student a general idea of the state of the drama before and during the period with which this chapter deals: to this a few remarks on certain typical productions of a dramatic kind, written between 1500 and 1580, are here added.

Such importance as John Heywood (1506—1565 ?) has in *An Interlude* of the history of our literature is due to his inter-
John Heywood. ludes, the names of some of which are 'A Play of Love,' 'The Four P's,' 'John the Husband, Tyb the Wife, and Sir John the Priest,' and 'A Merry Play between the Pardoner and the Friar, the Curate and the Neighbour Pratt,' the last being not a little indebted to Chaucer. The 'Four P's' will-serve as an example of this kind of dramatic composition. The matter of the play is, as usual in an interlude, the dialogue arising out of one incident—in this case a dispute as to which of three of the 'P's' ('Poticary, Pardoner, and Palmer) can tell the biggest lie, the fourth 'P' (Pedlar) being appointed judge. The 'Poticary begins moderately well by calling the Pedlar an honest man, but the Pedlar does not allow this falsehood to count—being perhaps prejudiced on the point—and bids them each tell (in the form of a narrative apiece) a specimen lie. The 'Poticary has a story of a marvellous cure, which is beaten by the Pardoner's tale of his rescue of a soul from hell—a woman's soul, which the devil was glad to part with, beseeching its rescuer to

'Apply thy pardons to women so,
That unto us there come no mo.'

The Palmer expresses much marvel at the fact that women can cause such trouble below : for his part he has been in every good city, town, or borough of Christendom, and seen some five hundred thousand women in the course of his life, yet, he adds,

'I never saw nor knew in my conscience,
Any one woman out of patience.'

He wins easily.

Nicholas Udall (1506-56) has the distinction of having written the first regular English comedy. 'A Ralph Roister Doister.' Comedy or Interlude,' is the description of it in his prologue, but it has little in common with the latter class, of which we have just spoken. Udall was a scholar, and a lover of the Latin drama; he had written several comedies, and also a tragedy in Latin, which are now lost, had edited selections of Terence for schoolboys, and compiled a class-book for his pupils—viz., 'Flowers of Latin Speaking.' He was a man of the New Learning and the new religious tendencies, on account of which latter he seems to have been ejected from the head-mastership of Eton, which he had held 1534-41: this was no doubt the time of the composition of his famous comedy. In the year before his death he was made Master of Westminster. In the prologue to 'Ralph Roister Doister' he directly appeals to the authority of 'the wise poets, long time heretofore . . . Plautus and Terence,' whose 'merry comedies . . . among the learned at this day bear the bell.' His play is divided into acts and scenes, and is written in riming couplets, the normal line containing, as a rule, twelve syllables; the action is cleverly developed, the dialogue is on the whole sprightly, and the plot¹ is not much thinner

¹ Here is an epitome of it: Ralph Roister Doister, a cowardly coxcomb—a sort of sixteenth-century Bob Acres—wishes to marry the widow Christian Custance and persecutes her with his ridiculous addresses. Mathew Merygreke, a puckish parasite, who is content to live on Ralph as much for the fun he gets out of him as for more substantial reasons, is his mischievous counsellor and messonger, and makes Ralph appear even more contemptible in the eyes of the widow than the fop's conduct deserves; an example of this is the way in which Mathew reads aloud Ralph's loving letter, altering the punctuation so as entirely to reverse the sense—a device which calls to mind the mechanics' prologue of the 'Pyramus and Thisbe' play in 'A Midsummer Night's Dream.' The widow's betrothed—Master Gawin Goodluck—hearing through his man, Sim Suresby, of Ralph's wooing, is rendered suspicious. The widow resolves to show him the groundlessness of his jealousy, and at the same time to punish her persecutor: a trap is laid (by the help of

than what we are accustomed to in modern nineteenth-century comedy. The *dramatis personae* have the great merit of being 'alive,' and are as far removed from the speaking automata of the Interlude as they are from the personified abstractions of the Morality. We do not, of course, find their characters distinguished by any subtle complexity, but this (even apart from the age in which the play was written) we shall not look for in farcical comedy. The minor characters—e.g., Tib Talkapace (the saucy maid), Sim Suresby (Gawin's faithful and thick-headed man), Madge Mumblecrust (the widow's ancient nurse)—are distinguished by masterly touches, and there is a completeness in the conception and execution of the whole—a completeness bred of faithful adherence to classic models—which is wanting in many later works that show far more genius. The three or four songs in the play are appropriate and pretty.¹

The first regular English tragedy,² like the first English 'Gorboduc,' comedy, was written by scholars on a classic model, and for the entertainment of a cultured audience. 'Gorboduc,' or 'Ferrex and Porrex,' was the work of Sackville, the author of the 'Induction' (see p. 162), and one Thomas Norton :³ it was acted for the first time early in 1562, by and before members of the Inner Temple, to which both its authors belonged.⁴ The plot of the play is thus summed up in the original 'argument': 'Gorboduc, King of Britain, divided his realms in his lifetime to his

Mathew) for Ralph, who comes to conquer her surrounded by his serving-men, and is ingloriously beaten by the widow and her maids. The play closes with preparations for the marriage of Gawin and the widow, who good-humouredly allow the fool Ralph to be reconciled to them.

* A play which was at one time supposed to be the first regular English comedy is the 'Gammer Gurton's Needle' of Bishop Still, printed in 1575, and written perhaps ten years earlier. It is a gross farcical piece of no great merit, except in the famous drinking-song, 'Back and side go bare, go bare,' which does not appear to have been of Still's composition.

* Thomas Preston's 'Cambyses' may perhaps have been produced about the same time: it is a mixture of comedy and tragedy of a ranting kind, with a strong flavour of the old Morality about it: the 'Vice' of the Morality-Interlude, the ancestor of the Shakespearian fool, figures in it, as in some later plays. Among the *dramatis personae* are 'Shame,' 'Diligence,' 'Cruelty,' and so forth.

* Thomas Norton (1532-84) is not otherwise notable. He published some translations of no account, and had some hand in the version of the Psalms, begun by Thomas Sternhold (died 1549) and completed by John Hopkins, which appeared in 1562.

* It is to be observed that most of the early Elizabethan men of letters were University and Inns of Court men.

sons, Ferrex and Porrex. The sons fell to dissension. The younger (Porrex) killed the elder. The mother (Videna), that more dearly loved the elder (Ferrex), for revenge killed the younger. The people, moved with the cruelty of the fact, rose in rebellion, and slew both father and mother. The nobility assembled, and most terribly destroyed the rebels; and afterwards, for want of issue of the prince, whereby the succession of the crown became uncertain, they fell to civil war,' etc. The play is divided into acts and scenes, and written for the most part in stiff blank verse, of which the following is a favourable specimen. Marcella, one of the Queen's women, is describing to Gorboduc the murder of Porrex:

'The noble prince, pierced with his sudden wound,
Out of his wretched slumber hastily start,
Whose strength now failing straight he overthrew,
When, in the fall, his eyes e'en now unclosed
Beheld the queen, and cried to her for help.
We then, alas! the ladies which that time
Did there attend, seeing that heinous deed,
And hearing him oft call the wretched name
Of mother, and to cry to her for aid
Whose direful hand gave him the mortal wound,
Pitying (alas! for nought else could we do)
His ruthless end, ran to the woeful bed,
Despoiled straight his breast, and all we might
Wiped in vain, with napkins next at hand,
The sudden streams of blood that flushed fast
Out of the gaping wound. O, what a look!
O what a ruthless steadfast eye me thought
He fixed upon my face! which to my death
Will never part from me, when with a braid,
A deep-fetched sigh he gave, and therewithal,
Clasping his hands, to heaven he cast his sight;
And straight, pale death pressing within his face,
The flying ghost his mortal corpse forsook.'¹

There is a dumb-show before each act, representing by simple pantomime the 'argument' of what is next to appear on the stage,² and a chorus in riming verse ends the act. The speeches of the characters are inordinately long—Eubulus, the sententious councillor, for instance,

¹ This is from Act iv. The first three acts are said to be by Norton, and the last two by Sackville.

² This dumb show is not in the Senecan originals.

concludes the fifth act with a speech of a hundred lines—and the gloom of the author of the 'Induction,' without his genius, seems to lie over the whole work; one is inclined to think that the audience who enjoyed it must have taken their pleasure very sadly. Hazlitt's criticism on it seems very just on the whole: 'This tragedy, considered as the first in our language, is certainly a curiosity, and in other respects it is also remarkable.'¹ As a work of genius, it may be set down as nothing, for it hardly contains a memorable line or passage; as a work of art, it may be considered as a monument to the taste and skill of the authors. Its merit is confined to the regularity of the plot and metre, to its general good sense and strict attention to decorum.'

The 'Jocasta' of Gascoigne² (and Kinwelmersh) may Adaptations fitly follow the mention of 'Gordobuc.' Like from the Italian this, it was in blank verse, and had a chorus after the acts and dumb-show before them; like it, too, it followed a classic model, but it was little more than mere translation of an Italian 'Giocasta,' which was itself an adaptation of Euripides' 'Phoenissae.' Like 'Gordobuc,' it was produced by and for the members of one of the Inns of Court, being first acted at Gray's Inn in 1566. At Gray's Inn in the same year another of Gascoigne's translations was produced—'The Supposes,' a prose comedy (apparently the first prose comedy in English) taken from Ariosto.³

A play in two parts, taken from an Italian source, but showing more originality than either of the foregoing, is George Whetstone's 'Promos and Cassandra,' which Shakespeare used in 'Measure for Measure,'⁴ from the 'Hundred Tales' of Giraldi Cinthio. It is in riming verse, some-

¹ 'The political maxims are grave and profound,' says Hallam. The object of the play is to show the evils of divided rule and the necessity of the succession to the Crown being fixed. The story is 'borrowed from our fabulous British legends' as they appear in Geoffrey of Monmouth: the dramatists altered it only slightly.

² See p. 164.

³ The original had been first published in prose, 1525, and from this Gascoigne took his translation, adopting some of the changes Ariosto had introduced when he turned it into verse; but he has inserted little of his own' (Hallam). Ariosto's play is in the fashion of the Latin comedy, being modelled on Plautus and Terence.

⁴ Whetstone's play, printed in 1578, had been 'never presented upon the stage when he produced his collection of prose tales, the 'Heptameron of Civil Discourses,' in 1582, which includes the 'Promos and Cassandra' tale in prose.

times in couplets, more often in the decasyllabic four-line stanzas Shake-peare uses only in his earliest plays. Here are a few lines from *Whetstone* which the student may compare with the interview between Claudio and Isabella in 'Measure for Measure' (Act iii., Sc. i.): it is Andrugio (Claudio) urging Cassandra (Isabella) to save his life by complying with the desire of Promos (Angelo):

'Nay, sweet sister, more slander would infame
Your spotless life, to reave your brother's breath,
When you have power for to enlarge the same,
Once in your hand doth lie my life and death.
Weigh that I am the self-same flesh you are,
Think I once gone the house will go to wrack;
Know forc'd faults for slander need not car';
Look you for blame if I fail through your lack.
Consider well my great extremity.
If otherwise this doom I could revoke,
I would not spare for any jeopardy
To free thee, wench, from this same heavy yoke.

CHAPTER XII.

GENERAL SURVEY OF THE PERIOD FROM ABOUT 1579 TO THE RESTORATION (1660).

(a) *The earlier part (to about the accession of Charles I., 1625).*

WHEN we speak of the 'Elizabethan' era in literature, we generally mean that great period of about forty-five years which extends from a few years before the beginning of Shakespeare's literary activity to a few years after his death. It is emphatically the 'age of Shakespeare' from one point of view, for Shakespeare overtops all his contemporaries not less than he does all his predecessors and successors; yet it is scarcely over-bold to assert that had no Shakespeare been, these years we are about to study would still have comprehended the most remarkable epoch in our literature. When that epoch opens the drama had only just begun to approach art; poetry, after its beautiful brief blossom-time in the latter part of the fourteenth century, had been well-nigh barren in the fifteenth, and had borne little fruit in the first three quarters of the sixteenth; prose, trying to shake itself free of the want of faith that would have held it fast fettered to mere controversy or didactics, and from the want of insight that would insist on regarding Latin as the only fit medium for the stylist, had scarce done more than come into being. When that epoch closes, we are fain to confess that, had there been neither Elizabethan poetry nor Elizabethan drama, the prose alone would have sufficed to render the age more than notable for us; that, had we only the

poetry, we would still regard the Elizabethan age as one of the chief epochs in our literature; and that, if but the drama—and that without Shakespeare's great share in it—were preserved to us, we could not fail to see that 'there were giants in those days.

To endeavour to account for the vigour and excellence of the productions of this period is a business as difficult and tedious as it is unsatisfactory. It is necessary and interesting, however, to observe that the conditions of the age seem to have been eminently favourable to the production of works of genius just at the time when genius was there.

Some of the conditions which favoured the production of great work.

As we have seen in our study of the earlier years of the reign, the New Learning had given a deep and wide impulse to the appreciation and cultivation of literature, and the spread of education had been creating a larger reading public, at the time when the printing-press was making it comparatively easy to render books accessible to those who desired them. Italy, old and new, had been England's chief teacher during the first three quarters of the sixteenth century, and much had been learned from her. Many, as we have seen, had merely copied, many translated, many adapted; but the mere imitation of foreign models alone brought no great work to light: the great writers when they came—Spenser in the forefront—made a literature which profited by the lessons that had been learned and the exercises that had been gone through, but which was thoroughly English and national. And in the England that heard Spenser's first songs, national life was fierce and strong. The internal struggles of the Reformation were practically over, and the land was making itself ready to face the assaults of the great Catholic power. The English sailors who were destined to repulse Spain were sailing new seas and discovering unknown lands. The spirit of adventure was in men's blood: the desire to achieve great deeds or to harass England's foes drove them to 'things unattempted yet' in enterprises as different as privateering and eclogue writing: the plots against the Queen and the attempt to bring England under foreign sway made Elizabeth the central point

round which the patriotism of her subjects grew and widened; and the end of the fierce grapple with Spain, in which it seemed as if God's breath blow to disperse the forces of Antichrist, raised to its height the pride in the feeling of national unity and prowess, and made them objects to reverence, to exalt, and, above all, to work for.

The peculiar glory of the age, and the one that reflects most closely the spirit of the times, is the Elizabethan drama. In considering the productions of the earlier part of the reign, we observed that the forms of the rough popular performances, of the plays written on strictly classical models, and of the copies of the Italian drama, were beginning to blend and giving rise to new varieties of English plays. The first men who deserve the name of English dramatists were—like their predecessors who merely imitated the Latins—men of scholarly attainments. The little group which began to occupy the stage about a decade before Shake-peare consisted of 'University wits,' of whom the chief are Lyly, Greene, Peele and Marlowe. When these men began to write, the form that the English drama was to take was yet uncertain: each helped to mould it. The frigidly mechanical blank-verse that Sackville wrote did not please Lyly: Gascoigne had written a prose-comedy, and Lyly adopted the same method in most of his plays, interweaving scraps of verse and doing much to perfect the prose dialogue. 'Peele,' says Professor Dowden, 'produced dramatic verse of a sweet but monotonous melody. A romantic spirit was introduced into English comedy by Robert Greene; over his poetry breathes the fresh air of English meadows; his style is more free, more bright, light, and natural than that of any preceding dramatic poet.'

Greatest of all this group, however, is Marlowe, with his tragic genius and impetuous power, who re-made—practically made—the English dramatic blank-verse line, and left us and Shakespeare the first of our great tragedies.

Then comes Shakespeare himself, whose work, beginning about 1590, ended but little before his death in 1616. Not long after he began to write for the stage his formidable rivals disappeared: Greene perished miserably in 1592;

Peele died four years later; Marlowe fell in a drunken brawl in 1593—by which time he had given us not only great work, but possibly the best he had in him. On the other hand, it is interesting to observe that, had Shakespeare been cut off at the age when Marlowe perished, we should have no plays of his which would give him a higher rank than Peele or Greene, while he would scarcely have their historical importance. It is interesting, too, to notice that, had there survived only one of his last dozen plays whose genuineness has not been challenged, we could not hesitate to pronounce its author a very great genius; and it is surely most instructive to find that, as far as the chronology of the plays is ascertainable, each period shows him, roughly speaking, to greater advantage than the former one. He was always learning.

He was teaching, too; for it seems safe to assume that the Elizabethan drama without Shakespeare would have deprived us of something more than his writings. Yet, among contemporaries and immediate successors, there are many who, though to a certain extent of Shakespeare's 'school,' are notable for original genius; such are, for instance, Chapman, Heywood, Dekker, Middleton, and Webster, to say nothing of many less considerable writers. The greatest of Shakespeare's younger contemporaries, however—the greatest, perhaps, of English playwrights since his time—is Ben Jonson, between whom and Shakespeare the resemblances are less numerous than the differences. We move away with him from the world of flesh and blood and permeating spirit, that Shakespeare created, towards an exhibition of automata, splendidly constructed to perform their maker's biddings: the high romantic temper of the Shakespearian comedy gives way to the artificial treatment of whims, freaks, and 'humours.' His characters are his creations less than his implements; he makes them move, laugh, and speak; and clever as the play, telling as the dialogue, masterly as the satire or humour may be, we rarely forget that it is only play and dialogue. He is a very great playwright; but if one judged from his comedies and tragedies only (and disregarded the interspersed songs), one would not believe him a great poet: fortunately we have

his pastoral drama (unhappily incomplete) and his lyrics to show that such a judgment would be incorrect.

Ben Jonson's literary career extends from about 1596 down to his death in 1637, commencing about the time when Shakespeare was writing or re-writing 'Romeo and Juliet.' In Jonson's comedy of humours we have suggestions of the comedy of manners that grew popular in England at the end of the seventeenth century, mainly under the influence of the French dramatists. But the earlier Restoration plays are more nearly related to the work of Beaumont and Fletcher. 'Their plays are now,' writes Dryden in 1667, 'the most pleasant and frequent entertainments of the stage, two of theirs being acted through the year for one of Shakespeare's or Jonson's'; and he alleges that 'the reason is because there is a certain gaiety in their comedies, and pathos in their more serious plays, which suits generally with all men's humours.' Their amazing fertility, the grace of their versification, their wit and cleverness in creating dramatic situations, their skill in portraying 'the conversation of gentlemen . . . whose wild debaucheries and quickness of wit in repartee no poet can ever paint as they have done,' gave vogue to a kind of drama very far removed from that of Shakespeare. They inaugurated, as Hallam says, a new school in comedy, and with them and it we leave the age of the Elizabethan drama.¹

¹ *Note on the Play-houses.*—The early Tudor plays were acted in private halls and grounds, in school buildings and inn-yards. The 'Children of Paul's' seem to have had a special room or hall for their performances in 1574; and two years later appear to have been built the two first public theatres—'The Curtain' and 'The Theatre,' both in Shoreditch. The actors were grouped in bands under the patronage of some high personage, whose name they took; so that they were known as the Queen's Servants, the Lord Strange's, the Admiral's, the Chamberlain's, and so forth. Other theatres arose just outside the City jurisdiction, like those mentioned; for the stage was looked upon with disfavour by the City Fathers and by many sober people—for good reason in many respects. By the river bank sprang up the Blackfriars (1596) and the Globe (1599). There were many others. The central portions of the public theatres were (at first) roofless, and there were the cheapest places: here, in the modern 'pit,' stood the 'groundlings,' who paid as little as a penny

The beginning of this great age in poetry is marked by the appearance in the year 1579 of the 'Shephord's Poetry. Calendar,' which earned for Spenser the name of the 'new poet.' There were new poets in plenty soon after this, for, almost suddenly as it seemed, the land was again 'fulfilled all' with songs. The number of Elizabethan miscellanies, of collections of 'songs and sonnets,' bears witness to the quantity of verse writers and readers in those days: the beauty of much of the work testifies to their quality. Among the chief of the lyrists, besides Shakespeare and Spenser, there appear Sidney, Marlowe, Watson, Daniel, Constable, and Drayton, while very many lesser authors of the time wrote love poems of singular beauty. The great poetic work of the age is, of course, Spenser's 'Faery Queen,' the magnificent masterpiece of the Renaissance in England. The spirit of patriotism and interest in England's history is seen not less clearly in many of the poems of the age than in the contemporary historic drama and chronicles; works such as Warner's 'Albion's England,' Daniel's 'Civil Wars,' Drayton's 'Polyolbion' and 'The Barons' Wars' bear witness to it. Pastorals of various kinds are given us by Spenser, and later by Wither and Browne; philosophising and 'metaphysical' verse by Lord Brooke, Sir John Davies and Donne; the last-named must be reckoned, too, with Marston and Hall, among the earliest of our formal satirists. Moreover, almost all those who have been spoken of as 'dramatists' have left us lyric poetry of a high order. Nor must we leave unmentioned here those who produced poetic English versions of foreign genius; these are represented by Chapman, who rendered Homer into English verse; Harington, the translator of Ariosto's 'Orlando Furioso'; and Fairfax, the translator of Tasso's 'Jerusalem Delivered.'

for admission: there were galleries and 'rooms' or boxes, or the spectator might have a stool on the stage if he liked to pay more and sit among the young bloods. Scenery at first there was none: the locality was indicated by its name painted on a board; and its nature by some distinctive feature, such as a tomb if it were a graveyard, pieces of ordnance for a battle-field, and so forth. The costumes, however, were often gorgeous, and the stage machinery became much more elaborate as the drama developed. The actors, who seem to have been remarkably good, were all males. [Fleay, etc.]

In the year 1579, in which Spenser's 'Shepherd's Kalendar' had appeared, we notice the publication of

Prose. Lyly's 'Euphues,' the first of the Elizabethan 'novels,' not counting as such the mere translations from Italian and French which, in collections like Paynter's 'Palace of Pleasure' or in the versions of many others formed a well-filled storehouse for the dramatists. Among the writers who trod the road which Lyly may be said to have opened are Greene, Lodge, Nash, and Sidney. The last-named is the author of the most important contribution to literary criticism during this century in his 'Apology for Poetry'—a work suggested to some extent by the fierce and not altogether undeserved attack on the stage made by Stephen Gosson in his 'School of Abuse.' A good deal of interest was awakened in the form of poetry, but there are no very valuable writings on the subject belonging to this period,—the chief of them are associated with the names of Webbe, Puttenham, and Campion. The great masterpiece of Elizabethan prose is connected with the controversy touching the forms of Church government, for it is to this that we owe Hooker's 'Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity': from the same cause sprang also a large amount of pamphleteering—the pamphlet performing in those days somewhat the same function as the modern 'leader' or magazine article—but none of this is of permanent literary value. The only prose writer of the time who may stand beside Hooker is Bacon, who has been considered equally great as a philosopher and a man of letters. Among those who practised historical composition, Raleigh stands pre-eminent for certain magnificent flashes of eloquence in an unequally written and cumbrously planned work. Other prose writers of less note, but still of interest, are to be found in great numbers, working on books of travel, chronicles, didactic treatises, and translations.

(b) *The later part (from the accession of Charles I. to the Restoration).*

The five-and-forty years or thereabouts which began with the year 1580 were full, we saw, of great things. They contained the plays of Shakespeare and most of the great

dramatists; the poems of Spenser and the Elizabethan lyrists; the prose of Hooker and of Bacon. But by the time that period closed, we marked that the drama was already on the wane, and that certain changes were coming over our poetry. In the following brief paragraphs we must endeavour to give an outline of the literary history of the next five-and-thirty years—the period which lies between the accession of Charles I. and the Restoration.

The drama, which we saw in its youth with Marlowe and his friends, and in its quick growth and vigorous prime with Shakespeare, had begun to show signs of old age—healthy and beautiful old age, but yet evidently journeying towards decay—with Ben Jonson and Fletcher. The former of these, though he lived till 1637, to welcome new writers as his ‘sons,’ and to receive the general homage of men of letters, had produced his best dramatic work before the period begins with which this section deals. With him are many other ‘later Elizabethans’—*e.g.*, Middleton, Webster, Chapman, Dekker, Thomas Heywood, Rowley—who continue to write; but of the new dramatists only three at most may be considered worthy to rank as continuing the great but dying race of ‘Elizabethan’ playwrights. These are Massinger, Ford, and Shirley, though the last has scarcely a right to rank with his companions. Of names of less note there is no lack; but there is none other here of real importance.

While, however, the drama itself was plainly going down, the playhouses, the mechanical aids to its exposition (scenery, dresses, etc.), and the patronage extended to it by the upper classes increased. At Court the highest in the land took part in ‘Masques,’ in which Charles I.’s consort Henrietta Maria, did not disdain to act,—for women appeared in these entertainments, though the practice of employing boys for female parts in the theatres was not discontinued till after the Restoration. On the other hand, even from the birth of our drama there had been serious-minded folk who viewed the theatres with disfavour, an example of which we have seen in the attacks made upon it—by Gosson, for example, in his ‘School of Abuse’—in Elizabeth’s reign. Under James I. and Charles I., however, the

stage was powerfully enough protected to hold its own against its foes, and venturous enough to taunt them with many gibes and sneers at Puritanism. In 1634 William Prynne was punished with most cruel severity for writing his invective against play-acting entitled 'Histrio-mastix' [Actor-scurge]: his punishment, it is true, was partly due to the fact that his book contained matter which might be regarded as a personal insult to the Queen. However, the turn of the derided Puritans came before long, and on the outbreak of the Civil War in 1642 the theatres were ordered to be closed. That date may be said to mark the absolute close also of the great epoch of our dramatic literature, for when the theatres re-opened on the Restoration a new race of playwrights came into existence. The theatres had shut apparently just about the time when the Elizabethan drama was dying a natural death.

In poetry, there were signs that the fervour and enthusiasm of the great Elizabethans were well-nigh exhausted, and that many minor poets were endeavouring to make up for the lack of these qualities by the manufacture of gaudy ornament and mere wild extravagance. In Donne, for instance, we have seen that taste for strange analogies, far-fetched comparisons and combinations, and other 'conceits,' which has left its mark on so much seventeenth-century verse. These defects, indeed, had not been altogether absent from earlier poetry; but now, when, as was frequently the case, they were found in conjunction with formless and flabby versification, harsh diction, and inharmonious rhythms, they prepared the way for a reaction in favour of writing by rule, and according to the dictates of common-sense. The full results of that reaction, which gives us the so-called 'classical' poetry, we must look for after the Restoration. In these years preceding it we shall meet with the last of the Elizabethan romantic poets and the first of the new school.

The little group of later Spenserians, which had included Giles and Phineas Fletcher, and to some extent Browne, practically ends with Wither, whose earlier and best work justifies us in reckoning him among the disciples of the author of the 'Shepherd's Kalendar'; for after these there

is no one of much note who may be considered to have derived the main source of his inspiration from Spenser, though several—including the greatest—show signs of his influence.

The lyrists appear in great number. One section of them—'court-poets,' as they have been called—includes Herrick, Suckling, Lovelace, Carew, and many others. Of these Waller is remarkable, not only for the grace of his songs, but because to him is given, along with Denham and Cowley,¹ the credit of having by example and influence done much to bring about the reaction against the excesses of Romanticism which gave us what is known as 'classic' poetry after the Restoration. Cowley, whose reputation was so stupendous in his lifetime, and has faded so completely, is a writer, the character of whose work demands careful scrutiny from the student of literary history, for in him we have one in whom the old habits combine with new tendencies. A little group of religious lyrists includes George Herbert, Crashaw, and Habington; and with them let us mention here the name of a singer in some ways akin to the first-named—the puritan Andrew Marvell, the friend of Milton.

Of Milton we need not speak at any length in this introductory chapter. Save for traces of the school of Donne which he exhibits in some of his earlier works, he has little in common with any of his contemporaries, and little or no influence on them. The giant descendant of the Elizabethans, he stands as a poet apart from them, from the rest of their offspring, and from the new race now peopling the world. Let us but bear in mind that his work in verse and prose was going on side by side with theirs. The 'Ode on the Nativity' was written in 1629; 'Samson Agonistes' appeared in 1671.

The great name in the prose-literature of the age is undoubtedly the eloquent Jeremy Taylor, who ranks indeed amongst the greatest of English prose writers. Next perhaps to him for uniform excellence are Browne, the author of the 'Religio Medici,' and Fuller, whose 'Worthies' are familiar (by name, at least) to all.

¹ See the quotation from Dryden on p. 293.

Thomas Hobbes who, if not the equal of these in literary rank, occupies no low place therein, is more important for his position in the history of thought, and his influence on the minds of succeeding generations. Of other philosophers and theologians there is a long array, including—to mention only a few of them—Baxter, Lord Herbert, Chillingworth, Filmer, Cudworth, and of course Milton; but his poetry has as far outshone his prose as it has his contemporaries' verse. The bulk of the writing of the age is, naturally enough, theological, philosophical, polemical; but there are not wanting authors in this time who, by work of a very different kind, have achieved a permanent place in our literature—as, for instance, Earle, Selden, and Isaac Walton.

CHAPTER XIII.

SHAKESPEARE'S FORERUNNERS.

THERE are two or three plays ascribed to one Thomas Kyd, ^{Thomas} of whom, apart from his works, next to nothing ^{Kyd} is known. Johnson, in the famous verses prefixed to the famous 'First Folio,' calls him 'sporting Kyd'—

'And tell how far thou didst our Lyly outshine,
Or sporting Kyd, or Marlowe's mighty line'—

perhaps in mere jest on his name, more likely in grim irony. For 'sporting Kyd' is probably the founder of the species of play called by J. A. Symonds 'the tragedy of blood,' which exists solely in and for bloodshed, and whose stock ingredients are blows, threats, swords, poison, duels, murders, insanity. It consists of bombastic, tragic plays, degenerating into melodrama in their surfeit of horrors. Examples are seen in Marlowe's 'Jew of Malta'—in some respects Marlowe never quite emerged from this species—in Shakespeare's (?) 'Titus Andronicus'—in the first act of which we have a human sacrifice, and the murder of a son by a father; in the second, a murder, and the outrage and mutilation of a woman; in the third, two executions and the mutilation of Titus; in the fourth, a murder; in the fifth, six murders, a death by torture, and a banquet of two dead sons set before their mother—in Marston's 'Antonio's Revenge,' Webster's 'White Devil' and 'The Duchess of Malfi'; while in 'Hamlet' we have a glorified specimen of the same class. Kyd almost certainly founded the species in the two plays 'The First Part of Jeronimo' and 'The Spanish Tragedy, or Hieronimo is Mad Again'; and the pre-Shakespearean 'Hamlet' is assigned to him with great probability. He has also left us a translation of Garnier's 'Cornelia.' 'The author of "The Spanish Tragedy,"' says

Professor Ward, 'was a contemporary of greater dramatists than himself; but his genius unmistakably pointed in the direction which our tragic drama pursued in their hands. Himself imitated as well as ridiculed, there is no reason why he should be denied the tribute due to original power.' Kyd used a mixture of blank verse and rhyme, and wrote at a time when the struggle as to what was to be the vehicle of the drama, though begun, was by no means decided. That prose, too, could be made to serve very aptly in comedy, at any rate, Lyly, the author of 'Euphues,' now showed.

Lyly's plays are eight in number,—all comedies. The first of these seems to be 'The Woman in the Moon,'¹ a play presented, like so many mediæval poems, under the form of a dream. Like these, too, it introduces such characters as personifications of Nature, of Concord and Discord, etc. Lyly has a delicate lyrical touch, which is felt to advantage in Apelles' song in 'Alexander and Campaspe':—

'Cupid and my Campaspe played
At cards for kisses—Cupid paid.
He stakes his quiver, bows and arrows,
His mother's doves and team of sparrows:
Loses them, too; then down he throws
The coral of his lips, the rose
Growing on 's cheek (but none knows how);
With these the crystal of his brow,
And then the dimple of his chin—
All these did my Campaspe win.
At last he set her both his eyes.—
She won, and Cupid blind did rise.
Oh, love, has she done this to thee?
What shall, alas! become of me?'

His other plays are 'Endymion,' 'Sappho and Phao,' 'Midas,' 'Mother Bombie,' 'Galatea,' and 'Love's Metamorphosis'—the last-mentioned being the only one of them not in prose. 'Endymion, the Man in the Moon,' has attracted considerable attention, from the attempts that have been made to identify the characters in it with Lyly's contemporaries—'Cynthia,' we are told, is the Queen,

¹ It is argued that it is the first from certain internal (but inconclusive) evidence.

'Endymion' is Leicester, 'Tellus' is the Countess of Sheffield, and so forth—and to interpret the alleged personal allegory of the plot. It is of more importance to notice that, in this play, the author exhibits more signs of dramatic power in characterisation and the portrayal of emotions than hitherto, and of more interest to learn that evidences of Shakespeare's familiarity with it have been established. Shakespeare, though possibly he laughs good-humouredly at Lyly now and again, seems to have appreciated him. 'The Midsummer Night's Dream' may owe something to 'The Woman in the Moon,' and the brisk-smartness, the puns and quips of the fanciful earlier comedies show touches of Lyly's teaching. 'His real service to the progress of the drama is to be sought,' says Professor Ward, 'neither in his choice of subjects nor in his imagery; though to his fondness for fairy-lore and the whole phantasmagoria of legend, classical as well as romantic, his contemporaries—and Shakespeare in particular—were indebted for a stimulative precedent. It lies in his adoption of Gascoigne's innovation of writing plays in prose; and in his having, though under the fetters of an affected and vicious style, given the first example of brisk and vivacious dialogue. The ridicule which his affectations earned for him did not prevent his contemporaries and successors from availing themselves of the precedent thus set; and when we rejoice over the flow of wit, the flash of repartee, and the dialectical brilliancy of some of the most famous comic scenes in Shakespeare and Ben Jonson, we should not forget that the path had first been opened by the writer whom they "so much outshone."

Peele, like Lyly, Greene, Marlowe, and the rest of this group, was a university man—he was educated at George Peele, ? 1552-1597. Oxford—and fond, like them, of displaying his knowledge of classics by quotations and tags. His chief dramatic works are 'The Arraignment of Paris' (1580), 'The Chronicle of Edward I.' (1593), 'The Old Wives' Tale' (about 1594), and 'David and Bethsabe' (published posthumously). Besides these he devised a number of pageants, wrote a considerable amount of non-dramatic verse, and collaborated with other playwrights. He is generally

believed to be the author of a play called 'The Battle of Alcazar.'

The 'Arraignment of Paris' is a pretty play, in which the dramatist shows us Paris brought to trial before Zeus for his award of the apple to Venus. He uses a variety of metres—the rhyming fourteen-syllabled line, the heroic couplet, various lyric measures, and some blank verse—introduces the Fates speaking in Latin, and puts an Italian song into the mouth of Helen of Troy. The passage in which Diana refers the contention to the Queen, before whom the play was acted, is worth reproducing as an example of Peele's smooth, sweet blank verse:—

'There wones within these pleasant shady woods,
Where neither storm nor sun's distemperature
Have power to hurt by cruel heat or cold,
Under the climate of the milder heaven,
Where seldom lights Jove's angry thunderbolt,
For favour of that sovereign earthly peer,
Where whistling winds make music 'mong the trees,
Far from disturbance of our country gods,
Amid the cypress-springs, a gracious nymph,
That honours Dian for her chastity,
And likes the labours well of Phœbe's groves.
That place Elysium hight, and of the place
Her name that governs there *Eliza* is;
A kingdom that may well compare with mine,
An ancient seat of kings, a second Troy,
Is compassed round with a commodious sea.'

'Edward I.' is noticeable, though not otherwise of much value, as helping to mark the stage that had been reached in the progress from the older chronicle-histories to the Shakespearian history plays. The 'Battle of Alcazar' is a play of the 'Tamburlaine' type (see p. 210), a kind of production for which Peele's genius was most ill-fitted; it is full of rant and bombast. 'The Old Wives' Tale' is an amusing hurly-burly of farcical incidents, with an interest for its ridicule of poor Gabriel Harvey (see p. 167), and for the fact that it contains a hint for the plan of an incomparably greater work—Milton's 'Comus.' It is generally considered that the tragedy of 'David and Bethsabe' is Peele's finest drama. The play is written throughout in

smooth—too smooth—blank verse, with passages of strange beauty, such as this, put into David's mouth :—

'Now comes my lover tripping like the roe,
And brings my longing tangled in her hair.
To 'joy her love I'll build a kingly bower,
Seated in hearing of a hundred streams,
That, for their homage to her sovereign joys,
Shall, as the serpents fold into their nest,
In oblique turnings, wind their nimble waves
About the circles of her curious walks ;
And with their murmur summon easeful sleep
To lay his golden sceptre on her brows.—
Open the doors and entertain my love ;
Open, I say, and, as you open, sing
Welcome, fair Bethsabe, King David's darling.'

It is as a writer of melodious verse, not as a dramatist, that Peele claims one's admiration.

Greene, after a good education—he was at both universities—and after travelling on the Continent, betook himself to London to earn a living by his facile pen. He is, perhaps, to be regarded as the chief of the Elizabethan novelists,—the men who, following in the wake of the Italians and Spaniards, wrote sometimes romantic, at other times more realistic, fiction. Among his tales are 'Pandosto, the Triumph of Time' (on which is based Shakespeare's 'Winter's Tale'), 'Menaphon,' 'Mamillia, a Mirror for the Ladies of England,' and a collection of stories entitled 'Perimedes the Blacksmith.' He wrote poetry, too—as, indeed, did nearly all the writers of the day—lived a loose and shiftless life, and died under pitiful circumstances. Some of his pamphlets—and notably the 'Repentance' and the 'Groatsworth of Wit bought with a Million of Repentance'—contain much self-accusation and description of the wretched state he reduced himself to by his follies and vices ; it is possible, however, that he coloured his narrative with an eye to the public. His plays (all written between about 1580 and 1590) are 'Friar Bacon and Friar Bungay,' 'Alphonsus, King of Arragon,' 'The Scottish History of James IV. . . . with a pleasant Comedy presented by Oberon, King of the Fairies.' and 'Orlando Furioso.' 'George-a-Green, the Pinner of Wake-

Robert
Greene,
?1561-1592.

field,' is also attributed to him, and there is ground for thinking he had a hand in the early forms of the Shakespearian 'Henry VI.' He is a fertile and fluent writer, with plenty of imagination, much grace and considerable humour.

Greene had some share in a prose-play entitled 'A Looking-Glass for London and England,' his fellow-
Thomas Lodge, 1557-1625. worker in it being Thomas Lodge, another of this band of literary youths. Early in his career he showed the bent of his mind by answering Gosson's attack on the stage—'The School of Abuse' (1579)—by a 'Defence of Poetry, Music, and Stage Plays,' which was in turn replied to by Gosson with 'Plays Confuted in Five Actions,' etc. His chief contribution to the drama, besides the play mentioned, is the 'Wounds of Civil War.' He wrote a number of prose-romances and tracts, including 'Rosalind,' which gave Shakespeare the material for 'As You Like It,' and itself owes something to the pseudo-Chaucerian 'Tale of Gamelyn': it has as a sub-title 'Euphues' Golden Legacy, found after his Death in his Cell at Silixedra,' etc. 'Euphues' Shadow,' 'Forbonius and Prisceria,' and 'An Alarm against Usurers,' from whom he seems to have suffered, are other of his pamphlets. His 'Rosalind' was written while on a voyage of adventure, of which he possibly gave an account in his lost 'Sailor's Kalender.' His chief poetical works are 'Phillis,' a collection of lyrics, and 'Scilla's Metamorphoses,' described by Mr. Gosse as a 'rambling piece in the six-line stanza, produced rather in consequence of the success of "Venus and Adonis" than out of any genuine desire to tell a classical story.' A 'Fig for Momus' may be mentioned as giving him a place among early satirical writers. In his later life he settled down to a profession, becoming a physician, and producing works of a graver nature, such as translations of Josephus and Seneca, and a 'Treatise of the Plague.'

We have found it convenient to mention Lodge here, though he is of little account as a playwright, among the group of workers who helped to fashion the drama before Shakespeare. Nash, too, is famous as a writer of pamphlets rather than a dramatist,

Thomas Nash, 1567-1600.

but his work is so intimately connected with this little band as to make it seem advisable to include him here. His plays are now a lost drama, 'The Isle of Dogs'—for which he was imprisoned—and a satirical burlesque entitled 'Summer's Last Will and Testament.' Nash's prose writings are of the most varied kind, including a preface to his friend Greene's 'Menaphon,' in which he ridiculed the bombastic rant of Tamburlaine plays; a number of attacks in the Marprelate controversy on Gabriel Harvey and others; a 'Pierce Penniless,' in which he gave a more or less truthful account of himself; a novel entitled, 'The Unfortunate Traveller, or the Life of Jack of Wilton,' and much else. Like so many of these Elizabethan writers, he died young, literature then signifying only too often 'fame, poverty, quarrels, imprisonment, and an early death.'

Most important of all in this band, whether they are looked at as those who helped to sharpen the tools for Shakespeare's use, or purely for their merits as authors, is Marlowe,—Marlowe, whom Peele weeps as

'Fit to write passions for the souls below,
If any wretched souls in passions speak.'

Marlowe was born in Canterbury of humble parents, and educated at the King's School there, proceeding subsequently to Cambridge. He began to write about 1585; produced in rapid succession his plays of 'Tamburlaine,' 'Faustus,' 'The Jew of Malta,' 'Edward II.,' and 'The Massacre of Paris.' He was killed in a tavern-brawl at Deptford, at the age of thirty. He is said to have lived a hand-to-mouth, wild, and disreputable existence in London, and he is particularly called upon by his fellow-dramatist, Greene, in his 'Groatsworth,' to repent: it is certain that he was to have been proceeded against on a charge of atheism, had his death not delivered him.

Marlowe's first play is 'Tamburlaine,' and it is remarkable not only because of its literary and poetic merits, but because it is the first play written for the public at large in blank verse.¹ In his prologue the writer at once declares his aim:

¹ 'Gorboduc,' of course, was in blank verse; but it was of an academic character, meant for an educated private audience (see p. 148).

'From jiggling veins of rhyming mother wits,
And such conceits as clownage keeps in pay,
We'll lead you——'

'Tamburlaine' is in two parts, each of five acts. It is characterised by its high and often ranting diction, its sensational situations, and its wild and often almost ludicrous energy. There is, however, as in all Marlowe's writing, plenty of fine poetry in it, spite of the extravagances of expression, which it is thought he used purposely with the design of making his blank verse sound as effective to the play-going public as rhyme did. It is from 'Faustus'—the story of the necromancer's bargain with the devil, which Goethe afterwards used—that we select a short specimen of his poetic genius; these are the matchless lines in which Faustus addresses the vision of Helen conjured up for him:—

'Was this the face that lanch'd a thousand ships,
And burnt the topless towers of Ilium?
Sweet Helen, make me immortal with a kiss.—
Her lips suck forth my soul: see where it flies!
Come, Helen, come, give me my soul again.
Here will I dwell, for heaven is in these lips,
And all is dross that is not Helena.
I will be Paris, and for love of thee,
Instead of Troy shall Wertenburg be sacked;
And I will combat with weak Menelaus,
And wear thy colours on my plumed crest;
Yea, I will wound Achilles in the heel,
And then return to Helen for a kiss.
Oh, thou art fairer than the evening air
Clad in the beauty of a thousand stars.'

Passing over the 'Jew of Malta'—a play in which Barabas and Abigail and some elements in the plot may have helped to create Shylock and Jessica and some incidents in 'The Merchant of Venice'—and 'The Massacre of Paris,' an occasional and polemical work . . . overcharged with the anti-Catholic passion of the time, we come to his 'Edward II,' which is the first great specimen of the historical play, an example of a kind of drama of which Shakespeare afterwards gave us masterpieces. The only worthy specimen of that class hitherto had been the play of Peck's—'Edward I.'—noticed above, itself a great advance on what had pre-

viously been done, though not to be compared with Marlowe's 'Edward II.' It is thought by some, however, that the second and third parts of 'Henry VI.' (or the plays on which they were founded—see p. 215) had already been written, but, even if this be so, they cannot be said to approach Marlowe's 'Edward II.' in tragic power. Another play of Marlowe's, which he seems to have left unfinished, is a tragedy entitled 'Dido, Queen of Carthage,' probably completed by Nash. His chief non-dramatic work, besides some shorter poems, among which is the well-known 'Passionate Shepherd,' is his 'Hero and Leander,' which, says Mr. Swinburne, 'stands alone in its age, and far ahead of the work of any possible competitor between the death of Spenser and the dawn of Milton. In clear mastery of narrative and presentation, in melodious ease and simplicity of strength, it is not less pre-eminent than in the adorable beauty and impeccable perfection of separate lines or passages.'

'The place and the value of Christopher Marlowe as a leader among English poets,' says the same writer, 'it would be almost impossible for historical criticism to overestimate. To none of them all, perhaps, have so many of the greatest among them been so deeply and so directly indebted. Nor was ever any great writer's influence upon his fellows more utterly and unmixedly an influence for good. He first, and he alone, guided Shakespeare into the right way of work; his music, in which there is no echo of any man's before him, found its own echo in the more prolonged but hardly more exalted harmony of Milton's. He is the greatest discoverer, the most daring and inspired pioneer, in all our poetic literature. Before him there was neither genuine blank verse nor a genuine tragedy in our language. After his arrival the way was prepared, the paths were made straight for Shakespeare.'

We go on from Marlowe, who accomplished so much in his brief spring, and gave promise of such splendid summer, to one whose early growth was less rapid, but whose maturity gave us the grandest and most enduring produce of our literature.

CHAPTER XIV.

SHAKESPEARE.

SHAKESPEARE was born in 1564 at Stratford-on-Avon in Warwickshire, where his father, John Shakespeare, was trader and farmer, and at that time in prosperous circumstances. During the poet's boyhood, John Shakespeare fell gradually into poverty; he parted with the land his wife—Mary Arden, a woman of good connections—brought him, was prosecuted for debt, and deprived of his alderman's gown. Of William Shakespeare, between the time of his baptism and his marriage in his nineteenth year to Anne Hathaway (a woman some eight years his senior), we know almost nothing: it is conjectured that he received some little classical education at the Stratford Grammar School, and that he cast about to earn a living when his father's troubles thickened. Various traditions—all unreliable—make him out to have begun life as a butcher, schoolmaster, lawyer, etc.; but there is no evidence as to his employment in any way until we find him attacked in 1592 by Greene, whose language makes it certain that the object of his anger is a new and successful actor-author who did not belong to the little clique of university men then writing for the stage. The year in which he had come to London is not certainly known, though it was probably two or three years after the birth of his second daughter, Judith, in 1585. The story that connects his departure from Stratford with a prosecution for poaching on Sir Thomas Lucy's deer-park at Charlcote rests on no good authority. Possibly the occasion of 'The Queen's Players' passing through Stratford in 1587 may have decided a young would-be actor to try his fortune in town. The dedication, in 1593, of his first published work, 'Venus

and Adonis,' shows that he had by that time become connected to some extent with a man of rank, for it is addressed to the Earl of Southampton, to whom also is dedicated 'Lucrece' in the year following. Southampton, it may be added, is thought to have helped the poet materially and socially. About this time Shakespeare appears among the actors who played before the Queen, and a few years later he is able to spend a considerable sum upon the purchase of New Place, in Stratford, so that he seems, either as actor or author (or both), to have thriven in worldly matters: at the same time (1597) evidence of his popularity as a writer is furnished by the fact that his plays now begin to be printed. From that date until his death there are indications that his contemporaries looked upon him as their chief dramatist. He became a partner in the Globe Theatre in 1599, made further investments at Stratford, and retired there about 1612. Four years later he died.

The publication of Shakespeare's plays began with the Publication year 1597, and between that date and his death of the Plays. there were numerous quarto editions of separate plays, many of them printed without the author's sanction and in an imperfect form. In 1623 two of his fellow-actors (Heminge and Condell) collected and published what purported to be a complete and accurate edition of their dead friend's plays: this—it is known as the 'first folio'—contains all those which commonly pass under Shakespeare's name, except 'Pericles,' which first appeared (along with several undoubtedly spurious plays) in the 'third folio' of 1664. The precise order in which Shakespeare's plays followed one another is a thing which, unfortunately, is not certainly known; but the labours of editors and commentators have enabled us to fix the chronology with something approaching correctness. It is customary to divide the whole time of his literary production into four nearly equal periods of about half a dozen years each.¹

¹ The following is a scheme due to Dr. Furnivall:—

First Period [1588—1594]. *Titus Andronicus* (1588), *Love's Labour's Lost* (1588-9), *Comedy of Errors* (1589-91), *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (1590-91), *Two Gentlemen of Verona* (1590-92), 1, 2 and 3 *Henry VI.* (1590-94), *Romeo and Juliet* (1591-3), *Venus and Adonis* (1592-3), *Lucrece* (1593-4), *Richard II.* (1593-4), *Richard III.* (1594).
Second Period [1595—1601]. *John* (1595), *Merchant of Venice* (1596), *Taming of the*

We have spoken of Greene's reference to Shakespeare, whom he calls (in 1592) 'an upstart crow beautified with our feathers, that with his
The First Period: Histories—
Henry VI., 'Tiger's heart, wrapt in a player's hide,'
Richard III.,
Richard II., supposes he is as well able to bombast out a blank verse as the best of you; and, being an absolute *Johannes Factotum*, is in his own conceit the only *Shakespeare* in the country.' The line which Greene applies to Shakespeare is slightly altered from the

'O tiger's heart wrapt in a woman's hide!'

which York hurls at Queen Margaret in the Third Part of 'King Henry VI.' [I. iv. 137], and this line is to be found in 'The True Tragedy of Richard Duke of York,' a play whose authorship is not definitely known. Judging from both internal and external evidences, it seems pretty certain that Shakespeare began his career as a playwright by altering and adapting, and perhaps collaborating. The 'First Part of King Henry VI.' is believed to have been only touched by Shakespeare, the main work being done perhaps by Marlowe, Peele, and Greene: it follows Holinshed's 'Chronicles' (a source of which the dramatist frequently availed himself), and deals mainly with the war against France and the jealousies between the English nobles. For the coarse treatment of the Maid of Orleans Shakespeare is held not to be responsible; while, on the other hand, the garden scene [II. iv.], where Plantagenet plucks the white rose and Somerset the red, is generally ascribed to him. So, too, to Shakespeare, it is thought, is due the greater part of Act IV., including the intercourse between the heroic Talbots. The play was probably written about 1591; it was followed, a year or two later, by the Second and

Shrew (1596-7), 1 Henry IV. (1596-7), 2 Henry IV. (1597-8), Merry Wives of Windsor (1598-9), Henry V. (1599), Much Ado about Nothing (1599-1600), As You Like It (1600), Twelfth Night (1601), All's Well that Ends Well (1601-2), *Sonnets* (? 1592-1608).
Third Period [1601-1607]. Julius Caesar (1601), Hamlet (1602-3), Measure for Measure (1603), Othello (1604), Macbeth (1605-6), Lear (1605-6), Troilus and Cressida (1606-7), Antony and Cleopatra (1606-7), Coriolanus (1607-8), Timon of Athens (1607-8).

Fourth Period [1608-12]. Pericles (1608), Tempest (1610), Cymbeline (1610-12), Winter's Tale (1611), Henry VIII. (1613).

Third Parts, which are based on 'The Contention between the two famous Houses of York and Lancaster' and the 'True Tragedy' already mentioned—two plays which are believed to be by Marlowe, Greene (and possibly Peele), who may or may not have been helped at first by Shakespeare. It is pretty generally agreed that Parts 2 and 3 of 'Henry VI.' were the result of Shakespeare's revision of these plays, though there are some who believe that he had no hand in them. In the First Part we left off at Suffolk's triumph in bringing about the marriage between Margaret and the weak Henry: in the next part we have the story of the guilty love of the new Queen for Suffolk and the developments of the faction-quarrels powerfully treated; the murder of 'the good Duke Humphrey' and the banishment of Suffolk, who is killed before he can escape from England; the rebellion of Cade, with its mingled comedy and tragedy; and, finally, the victory of York over Lancaster at St. Albans, with which the play closes. Of the Third Part, Margaret, the

'She-wolf of France (but worse than wolves of France),
Whose tongue more poisons than the adder's tooth,'

is the central figure; it continues the story of the Wars of the Roses, comprising the death of York at Wakefield, after the horribly powerful scene in which the Queen mocks him; the victory of first one side and then the other, ending with the final triumph of the Yorkists, with the 'wanton Edward' king, and the gentle, feeble Henry stabbed by 'the lusty George' and the crook-back Richard, who is now Duke of Gloucester. This Duke of Gloucester is the 'Richard III.' who gives his name to another (perhaps the next) of Shakespeare's historical plays—a magnificent melodrama, in which the whole interest circles round the actions of Richard, whose strong, mis-shapen body is mated to a spirit as powerful and as hideous. The play brings to a conclusion the Civil War series, ending with the death of Richard, after his countless crimes, by the hand of Richmond (Henry VII.) at Bosworth Field. Some hold that this play is a recast of an older one—basing their view mainly on the fact of its differing widely from the other undoubtedly Shakespearian historical plays, and its resemblance to

parts of 'Henry VI.'; but it is more likely, as Professor Dowden says, that Shakespeare 'was working . . . under the influence and in the manner of the great master of dramatic blank verse, Marlowe. . . . The entire play may be said to be the exhibition of the one central character; all subordinate persons are created that he may wreak his will upon them. This is quite in the manner of Marlowe. Like Marlowe also is the fierce energy of the central character, untempered by moral restraints, the heaping up of violent deeds, the absence of all reserve or mystery in the characterisation, the broad and bold touches, the demoniac force and intensity of the whole.' Perhaps shortly before this, more probably shortly after (about 1594), the remaining historical play of this period was written: this is 'Richard II.,' in which the dramatist tells the story of Richard's misgovernment and Bolingbroke's usurpation; the colours are less glowing and glaring than in 'Richard III.,' and the characters are more subtly and delicately drawn. We may look upon it as the first of Shakespeare's entirely original historical plays.

We have seen that there is good reason to believe that Shakespeare tried his 'prentice hand on remodelling older work. Perhaps a production of this kind—
The First
Period:
'Titus
Andronicus,' and, if so, possibly his first attempt—was 'Titus Andronicus,' a specimen of the 'shambles' tragedy, which was, as we know, rather popular at about the time when Shakespeare first came to London. The fact that the play is 'an accumulation of vulgar physical horrors' is not, of course, a very serious argument against its being the work of a beginner anxious to please the reigning taste; nor, perhaps, is much importance to be attached to the statement that the play is 'built on the Marlowe blank-verse system, which Shakespeare in his early work opposed'; for, if the play is Shakespeare's, it is evidently an early experiment which its author did not care to repeat. The date of its composition is usually given as about 1589, on the strength of Ben Jonson's allusion to it (he couples it with Kyd's 'Jeronimo') in 'Bartholomew Fair' (1614) as being some twenty-five or thirty years old. It is not very unlikely that a stage tradition current nearly a century

later may be near the truth; according to this, Shakespeare's part in the play was limited to giving 'some master-touches to one or two of the principal parts.'

Shakespeare's comedies begin with the bright, frolicsome 'Love's Labour's Lost,' full of jests and light-hearted merriment. Ferdinand, King of Navarre, has determined to seclude himself from the world with his three friends, Biron, Dumain, and Longaville, and 'not to see ladies, study, fast, not sleep.'

The First
Period :
Comedies.
'Love's
Labour's
Lost,'
'Comedy of
Errors,'
'Midsum-
mer Night's
Dream,'
'Two Gen-
tlemen of
Verona.'

The scheme breaks down, of course—as the mocking Biron knew it would—the disturbing element being the princess of France and her three ladies. The 'recluses' fall in love with the ladies, and are afraid of betraying their weakness to one another. Finally, they are convinced of the folly of their plan of cutting themselves off from the ways of men; but the objects of their wooing have to depart before granting their suit, as, in the midst of an entertainment got up to amuse them, the princess hears of her father's death. The play abounds in witty dialogue, the conversations between Rosaline and Biron anticipating in some measure Beatrice and Benedick ('Much Ado about Nothing'). There is much pleasant satire of affectations, more especially as seen in pictures of Don Armado, the 'refined traveller of Spain,' with his 'fire-new words,' and Sir Nathaniel the curate and Holofernes the schoolmaster, who garnish their talk with Latin phrases and constant pedantic allusions. There are pretty verses, too, scattered up and down the play, which is full of ingenious 'conceits': thus, for instance, Moth's song:—

'If she be made of white and red
Her faults will ne'er be known,
For blushing cheeks by faults are bled,
And fears by pale are shown :
Then if she fears, or be to blame,
By this you shall not know,
For still her cheeks possess the same
Which nature she doth owe.'

The plot of 'Love's Labour's Lost' perhaps Shakespeare invented; no original has been found for it. In the 'Comedy of Errors' he adapted his story from (a translation

of) the 'Menæchmi' of Plautus. It is a bustling farce linked to a pathetic story of sea-sorrow, which seems to be of Shakespeare's invention. Aegeon, a merchant of Syracuse, being found in Ephesus, then at enmity with it, is condemned by Solinus, Duke of Ephesus, to be put to death, unless he can pay a thousand marks ransom. Bidden by the Duke to tell the cause of his coming there, he relates how, in days gone by, travelling by water from Epidamnum with his wife and twin sons and the twin children he had bought to train up as attendants, he was shipwrecked; and though he managed to save one son (Antipholus of Syracuse) and one attendant (Dromio of Syracuse), he lost his wife with the other children (Antipholus and Dromio of Ephesus). Antipholus the Syracusan, being grown up, desired (with his Dromio) to seek his lost mother and brother, and Aegeon granted him permission; but when, after many years, he did not return, the father, fearing he had lost the last of his kin, set out to find him, and at length in his search came to Ephesus, where now he is condemned to die. He is granted one day to try and raise a ransom, and during this day the whole 'Comedy of Errors' is transacted. Antipholus of Syracuse, with his Dromio, has arrived at Ephesus that very morning, and the fun begins at once by Dromio of Ephesus (the other Dromio being sent on an errand) mistaking him for his own young master, and being mistaken by him for his own servant. Wherever one Dromio or one Antipholus is, he is taken for his duplicate, and the amusing incidents that arise out of the constant playing at cross-purposes are most ludicrously handled, especially the errors of the jealous Adriana, the Ephesian Antipholus's wife. In the end all is made clear, the lost are found, the wife of Aegeon is discovered in the abbess of a neighbouring convent, and Aegeon himself restored to liberty and to his family.

Another 'comedy of errors,' of a less boisterously farcical, more imaginative and delicate kind, is given us in 'The Midsummer Night's Dream,' where, however, the cross-purposes originate not in natural mistakes on the part of Hermia and Helena, Lysander and Demetrius, Titania and Bottom, but in the spells of the fairy creatures who bewitch

them. A truly beautiful play—or poem—is this, with its humorous love embroilments, just pathetic enough to be interesting without stirring us over-deeply, its delightful romantic-heroic figures of Duke Theseus and Hippolyta his Amazon bride, its charming group of malicious fragile sprites—churlish little Oberon, wilful little Titania, wicked little Puck—and their coarse, clumsy counterparts, the worthy mechanics of Athens, with Bottom the weaver for their chief glory. From the mouth of bright, vigorous, most courteous Theseus, we seem to hear the dramatist's own thoughts when, answering Hippolyta, who declares the 'tedious brief scene of young Pyramus and his love Thisbe' to be the 'silliest stuff,' he affirms that 'the best in this kind [*i.e.* plays] are but shadows; and the worst are no worse, if imagination amend them,' or when he characterises the poet as 'of imagination all compact . . .

'The poet's eye, in a fine frenzy rolling,
Doth glance from heaven to earth, from earth to heaven
And as imagination bodies forth
The forms of things unknown, the poet's pen
Turns them to shapes and gives to airy nothings
A local habitation and a name.'

We complete our survey of this group of early comedies with a glance at 'The Two Gentlemen of Verona,' a play which is founded upon a Spanish romance. It is, as Hazlitt says, 'little more than the first outlines of a comedy loosely sketched in.' Some of these outlines the dramatist filled in more carefully in the later romantic comedies.² The subject of the play is the friendship of Proteus and Valentine, the 'two gentlemen'; how it is sundered by lovers' treacheries,

¹ As regards the sources from which Shakespeare may have taken parts of the play, Mr. Play remarks that hints for the framework of Theseus and Hippolyta were probably received from Chaucer's 'Knight's Tale' [or North's *Plutaich*]; for the incidents of Thisbe from Chaucer's 'Thisbe of Babylon' [in the 'Legend of Good Women,' or from Golding's Ovid]; for the fairies from popular tales of 'Robin Goodfellow'; but Oberon from Greene's 'James IV.'

² In 'The Two Gentlemen of Verona' Shakespeare struck into a new path,' says Professor Dowden, 'which he was to pursue with admirable results; it is his earliest comedy in which a romantic love-story is told in dramatic form.' The story of 'The Two Gentlemen' had been dramatised before in a play called 'Felix and Felismena,' founded on Montemayor's 'Story of Felismena' in his pastoral romance 'Diana.' It is thought that Shakespeare may also have taken hints from Bandello's 'Apollonius and Sylla' and Sidney's 'Arcadia.'

and restored by the repentance of the deceiver. Proteus (whose name is typical) is in love with Julia at Verona, who returns his affection; he is sent to join his dear friend Valentine at Milan, where Valentine has fallen in love with the Duke's daughter Silvia, who is designed by her father for a wealthier suitor. Proteus on his introduction to Silvia straightway forgets his love for Julia and his friendship for Valentine, and determines to win her for himself. He betrays to the Duke the plot Valentine has confided to him of running away with Silvia, whom he meant to get out of the palace by a rope-ladder. The Duke makes Valentine reveal his secret (by a clumsy device), and banishes him. Proteus persecutes Silvia with his addresses, and she takes refuge in flight. Meanwhile Julia sets out to seek Proteus at Milan, disguising herself as a boy—a device often employed by the Elizabethan dramatists; she finds out her lover's faithlessness, enters his service as a page, and acts as messenger from him to Silvia. Silvia is captured in the forest by the outlaws who have made Valentine their king. He rescues her from Proteus, who pursues her; and finally, after Julia reveals herself, and Proteus is convinced of his baseness and folly, all are reconciled. The story is weak in places, and the winding-up of the play is so sudden and unnatural that it is thought that we have perhaps not got it in the form the writer left it in; some of the incidents, too, are awkward, as if the writer were careless about his machinery. Yet it is the most noteworthy of these earlier comedies in relation to Shakespeare's subsequent achievements: in *Launce* we have a specimen of the very best of his humour; in *Julia* we see a foreshadowing of *Helena* ('*All's Well*') and *Viola* ('*Twelfth Night*'); Silvia suggests *Juliet*, and the whole of the glowing treatment of youthful passion leads us on towards his first love-tragedy. This is '*Romeo and Juliet*,' founded on the 'tragic history' of these lovers as Arthur Brooke had rhymed it.¹

¹ The story of the two lovers, actions of rival houses, who perish miserably, is a very old one. Luigi da Porto first names them *Romeo* and *Giuiletta* (1535); Bandello shaped this into one of his tales (1554), and thence it was turned into French by Boisteau (1559); Brooke used Boisteau's version for his poem of '*Romeus and Juliet*' (1562); and Paluter included a prose rendering in his '*Palace of Pleasure*' (see p. 184).

The scene is Verona again—Verona, whose streets are filled with the brawls of the rival houses of Capulet and Montague. Young Romeo, a Montague, whom first we see fancy-smitten by the charms of a Rosaline, falls in love with and is loved by young Juliet, the daughter of the Capulets. They are secretly married; but Romeo is banished for slaying Tybalt, a Capulet, and Juliet is made to consent to marry Count Paris. She takes a drug on the eve of the wedding, which makes her seem dead to all but Friar Lawrence, who provided her with it; she is laid in the vault, and the Friar sends to Romeo at Mantua to tell him how the case really stands. Romeo, however, has already heard news of Juliet's death, flies to her tomb, and finding her apparently lifeless body there, kills himself; she, waking from her trance, sees Romeo dead by her side, and stabs herself with his dagger. The play is a tragic love-poem; all the interest of it—spite of such excellent lesser characters as brisk Mercutio, the coarse old Nurse, swaggaring Tybalt, and others—centres round Romeo and Juliet, and rather round their passionate love and their feelings for one another than round the incidents arising out of it; yet the story too is interesting in itself, and well adapted to be the plot of a stage-play.

Perhaps just about the time when Shakespeare was writing this play, subjects of tragedy fit to be put 'Venus and Adonis,' into the form of poems were engaging his attention; 'Lucrece,' 'Venus and Adonis' (published in 1593) tells in hot, over-gorgeous verse of the desire of the goddess and the death of the beautiful youth by the boar's thrust. Thus speaks the Queen of Love over the body of him she wooed in vain:—

'Since thou art dead, lo, here I prophesy:
Sorrow on love hereafter shall attend:
It shall be waited on with jealousy.
Find sweet beginning, but unsavoury end,
Ne'er settled equally, but high or low,
That all love's pleasure shall not match his woe.

Shakespeare's other poem which belongs to this period is 'The Rape of Lucrece' (published 1594), in which he tells the well-known tale of Tarquin's crime. The metre is

‘slightly more elaborate than that of ‘Venus and Adonis,’ the stanza being the seven-lined one often used by Chaucer. Here is an extract from the description of the ‘piece of skilful painting, made for Priam’s Troy’ :—

‘For much imaginary work was there ;
 Conceit deceitful, so compact, so kind,
 That for Achilles’ image stood his spear,
 Gripped in an armed hand ; himself, behind,
 Was left unseen, save to the eye of mind :
 A hand, a foot, a face, a leg, a head,
 Stood for the whole to be imagined.

* * * *

‘Lo, here weeps Hecuba, here Priam dies,
 Here manly Hector faints, here Troilus swoonds,
 Here friend by friend in bloody channel lies,
 And friend to friend gives unadvised wounds,
 And one man’s lust these many lives confounds :
 Had doting Priam checked his son’s desire,
 Troy had been bright with fame, and not with fire.’

Now that we have looked at the early histories and comedies, the first tragedies, and the two longer poems of Shakespeare, it may be well to sum up the chief characteristics of the various stages of his work. In the earliest plays the poet prefers rhyme to blank verse, which was not yet the established metro even for tragedy ; thus, in ‘Love’s Labour’s Lost,’ he has nearly twice as many rhymed as unrhymed lines (excluding prose), and passages in which the lines rhyme alternately in stanza form are rather frequent ; gradually he discards rhyme (‘Richard III.,’ perhaps written directly under Marlowe’s influence, is the first play in which it has a very small place) both in comedy and tragedy throughout the second period ; from the plays written after that it is (except in songs, etc.) almost entirely absent. Another

* On the subject of chronology it may be well to point out that several plays are generally assigned to particular periods of the poet’s career, because of the resemblances in metro, language, etc., which they bear to other plays, the date of which can be ascertained with more certainty. The plays which Meres, in his ‘*Palladis Tamia*’ (1598), mentions as placing Shakespeare beside Plautus and Seneca for comedy and tragedy, are ‘*The Two Gentlemen of Verona*,’ ‘*The Comedy of Errors*,’ ‘*Love’s Labour’s Lost*,’ ‘*A Midsummer Night’s Dream*,’ ‘*The Merchant of Venice*,’ ‘*Richard II.*,’ ‘*Richard III.*,’ ‘*Henry IV.*,’ ‘*King John*,’ ‘*Titus Andronicus*,’ and ‘*Romeo and Juliet*,’ besides another comedy, ‘*Love’s Labour’s Won*,’ which some think to be an earlier form of ‘*All’s Well*,’ of ‘*The Taming of the Shrew*,’ or of ‘*Much Ado*,’ Possibly it is a lost play.

change of a similar nature comes over his metre along with his attaining greater facility of handling blank verse: the sense of the lines in the earlier plays is apt to close with the verse (end-stopped lines); by degrees he rids himself of this fetter to bold expression, and lets the sense of one line 'overflow' or run on into another: in one of the earliest plays Dr. Furnivall calculates that nearly nineteen-twentieths of the lines are end-stopped; in one of the latest nearly a third of the lines 'run on.' Another step towards further absence from restraint is the use of 'light' and 'weak' monosyllables [e.g. *she, and*] at the end of the line, which marks the plays of the third and fourth periods; while the steady increase in the proportion of double endings is another accompaniment of the growth of Shakespeare's power over blank verse. Such are briefly the chief points of *metrical* difference between the work of Shakespeare at one time of his career and another.

English history ceased to be the theme of Shakespeare's writing when the second period had closed. Soon after finishing 'Richard II.' or 'Richard III.,' he turned to 'King John,' working again on the chronicles and on an old play.¹ The fact that

Shakespeare's only son Hamnet died in 1596 has caused some to hear the deep note of the poet's own sorrow in Constance's pathetic lament for her son Arthur in John's murderous clutches: 'You are as fond of grief as of your child,' says the French king to her, and she answers:—

'Grief fills the room up of my absent child,
Lies in his bed, walks up and down with me,
Puts on his pretty looks, repeats his words,
Remembers me of all his gracious parts,
Stuffs out his vacant garments with his form:
Then have I reason to be fond of grief!'

In Faulconbridge we have a fine, frank, vigorous Englishman, self-reliant and proud of himself and his country, hating baseness of spirit, and with touches of a royal mind that we may suppose him to have inherited; a more finished

¹ 'The Troublesome Reign of John, with the Discovery of King Richard Cœur de Lion's base son, vulgarly named the Bastard Faulconbridge.' Author unknown: printed at one time as Shakespeare's.

portrait of a similar character we find in Shakespeare's kingliest king, Henry V. He is the wild 'Henry, Prince of Wales,' of the two parts of 'Henry IV.' who consorts with fat old Falstaff and the company at the Boar's Head,[^] and bears himself gallantly against Hotspur—who strikes the chief justice for sentencing his roistering friend, and because the justice commits him to prison declares to him when he is king:—

'For this, I do commit into your hand
The unstained sword that you have used to bear;
With this remembrance, that you use the same
With the like bold, just and impartial spirit
As you have done 'gainst me.'

In 'Henry V.' he is the powerful, vigorous ruler, who has said good-bye to the follies of his youth and put his high spirits, strong mind and active body wholly at the service of his country. The Dauphin may think England

' . . . so idly king'd,
Her sceptre so fantastically borne
By a vain, giddy, shallow, humorous youth,
That fear attends her not,'

but we who heard him speak when he put on the crown by his dying father's bed are prepared for his noble bearing in court and camp. There is a high heroic triumphal strain running all through 'Henry V.,' beginning with the prologue, which would fain let us see

'the warlike Harry, like himself
Assume the post of Mars; and at his heels,
Leash'd in like hounds, should famine, sword and fire
Crouch for employment . . .'

The play is a poetic outburst of patriotism, of the pride that Elizabethans felt in the England that had but lately beaten back Spain from its shores. 'This England,' says Faulconbridge (in 'King John'),—

'This England never did, nor never shall
Lie at the proud foot of a conqueror,
But when it first did help to wound itself.
Now these her princes are come home again,
Come the three corners of the world in arms,
And we shall shock them, . . .'

and a like feeling of exultation in the power of England, that 'little body with a mighty heart,' firm united beneath a

firm ruler, is the main note of 'Henry V.'; and then, after this glorification of an English king, Shakespeare leaves English history.¹

'Henry IV.' (in a much less degree 'Henry V.') is comedy as well as history. The comedy of Sir John Falstaff, the central figure of the mirth of the play, is continued in a broad, noisy prose, in 'The Merry Wives of Windsor,' where the fat knight is brought by vanity and greed into all sorts of ridiculous positions. But Falstaff is not here the man we knew in 'Henry IV.,' nor the man whose death is afterwards described to us so movingly in 'Henry V.' His wit and eloquence have left him; his gross bulk and his name alone remind us of our old friend. Neither can one have a single particle of love for him to excuse his follies; he is merely a designing, bare-faced knave, and an unsuccessful one. 'He is,' says Hazlitt, 'like a person recalled to the stage to perform an unaccustomed and ungracious part'—recalled, according to (a not very trustworthy) tradition, by no less a person than Queen Elizabeth, whose appetite was not yet 'cloyed with fat meat' ['Hen. IV.', *Epilogue*], and who desired to have Falstaff in a comedy pure and simple. How the Court may have enjoyed the buck-basket and the fat woman of Brentford, we know not; but apparently this rough-and-tumble kind of horse-play did not much commend itself to its author, though there is something of the same kind of rough animal merriment about 'The Taming of the Shrew.' 'The Taming of the Shrew,' perhaps written about the same time; but here the critics hold that Shakespeare was but touching up the work of others, and that his genius 'goes in and out with the person of Katharina'—the perverse, fantastically wild-tempered 'shrew,' who is subdued by the stronger will of the equally fantastically wild Petruchio, the lover who at their first meeting tells her

' . . . will you, nill you, I will marry you.
Now, Kate, I am a husband for your turn,
For, by this light, whereby I see thy beauty—
Thy beauty that doth make me like thee well—
Thou must be married to no man but me;

¹ As regards 'Henry VIII.' see p. 237.

For I am he am born to tame you, Kate,
And bring you from a wild Kate to a Kate
Conformable as other household Kates.'

Perhaps about the same year as Shakespeare adapted this play for the stage, he produced the first of his greater romantic comedies, 'The Merchant of Venice,' the monument of Portia's loving wit, Antonio's friendship and Shylock's cruel and perfectly natural hatred. The dramatist worked-up some of the material he had used in the 'Two Gentlemen,' while in versification and diction it is akin to the earlier rather than the middle period of his work; but not hitherto had he so perfectly co-ordinated the development of plot and character, or brought before us each creation so vividly. The humour, too, is more refined than of old, not thrust upon us for the obvious purpose of amusing, but arising naturally out of the progress of events. The story of the choosing of the caskets by Portia's wooers the poet may have taken from a translation of the mediæval 'Gesta Romanorum,' the 'pound of flesh' perhaps from an Italian novel; but as usual, where Shakespeare borrows a story he thinks fit for his purpose, he shapes it to his own ends, creating anew the characters—as notably here in the case of the Jew. Another Italian tale gives him the plot of his next comedy, 'Much Ado about Nothing,' where again we are reminded in Beatrice and Benedick of earlier work in Biron and Rosaline ('Love's Labour's Lost'). The slander of Hero by Don John's machinations will, we know beforehand, be speedily set right by the interposition of immortal Dogberry and his friends; but nevertheless a high tragic situation is that of Claudio's denunciation of his betrothed at the altar, culminating with Hero's swoon and her father's (Leonato's) agonised

'Hath no man's dagger here a point for me?'

Two more comedies, again dealing with love in its lighter aspects, follow—'As You Like It' and 'Twelfth Night.' The first takes us to the forest of Arden, where we meet the exiled Duke, the melancholy Jaques, whimsical Touchstone, and Rosalind (in boy's attire) with Orlando wooing her, imagining her at her

'As You
Like It.'
'Twelfth
Night.'

bidding to be his Rosalind, but never doubting that she is the youth Ganymede she seems to be. In 'Twelfth Night' the mirth is furnished by the behaviour of the steward Malvolio, 'sick of self-love,' trapped by noisy Sir Toby Belch, dull-brained Sir Andrew Aguecheek, and pert Maria, the maid, into the belief that the lady Olivia, his mistress, is enamoured of him. This Olivia is wooed by the Duke, who employs his page 'Cesario'—Viola in disguise—as messenger to her; Olivia will not hear the Duke's love, but is enchanted by 'Cesario.' In the end Sebastian, Viola's brother, who had been supposed to be drowned, and who exactly resembles his sister, wins Olivia, and the Duke is enchanted with Viola, when the truth is revealed to him. This is the last of these joyful sunlit comedies, in which nearly all is fair and pleasant, and graver things—sin, sorrow, death—are touched on with but a light hand. In 'All's Well that Ends Well,' deeper feelings are stirred as we watch the endeavours of Helena to win the paltry Bertram, and the means to which she has to resort to gain her end.

Perhaps this last play belongs to the third period rather than to the second. A still darker 'comedy,' in which the same ugly incident that mars 'All's Well' reappears with more tragic and painful, but—as it seems to us—with more natural and justifiable surroundings, is 'Measure for Measure.'

Angelo, who is supposed to be of pious character and noble nature, is appointed to govern Vienna in the absence of the Duke. He is bidden to strictly enforce an almost obsolete law against loose morals, and the first person he has to condemn is a certain young gentleman, Claudio. His sister, Isabel—a novice in a nunnery convent—pleads with Angelo, at first vainly; but at length learns that she can save her brother at the price of her own honour. She tells her brother that therefore there is no escape for him. 'Oh, were it but my life,' she cries,

'I'd throw it down for your deliverance
As frankly as a pin.

Claud. Thanks, dear Isabel.

Isabel. Be ready, Claudio, for your death to-morrow.

Claud. Yes.—Has he affections in him,
That thus can make him bite the law by the nose,
When he would force it? Sure it is no sin,
Or of the deadly seven it is the least.

Isa. Which is the least?

Claud. If it were damnable, he, being so wise,
Why would he for the momentary trick
Be perdurably fined? O Isabel!

Isa. What says my brother?

Claud. Death is a fearful thing.

Isa. And shamed life a hateful.

Claud. Ay, but to die, and go we know not where;
To lie in cold obstruction, and to rot;
This sensible warm motion to become
A knotted clod; and the delighted spirit
To bathe in fiery floods, or to reside
In thrilling region of thick-ribbed ice;
To be imprisoned in the viewless winds,
And blown with restless violence round about
The pendent world; or to be worse than worst
Of those that lawless and incertain thoughts
Imagine howling: 'tis too horrible!
The weariest and most soothed worldly life
That age, ache, penury and imprisonment
Can lay on nature, is a paradise
To what we fear of death.

Isa. Alas, alas!

Claud. Sweet sister, let me live:
What sin you do to save a brother's life,
Nature dispenses with the deed so far
That it becomes a virtue.

Isa. O you beast!
O faithless coward! O dishonest wretch!
Wilt thou be made a man out of my vice?

* * * *

. . . Take my defiance!
Die, perish! Might but my bending down
Reprove thee from thy fate, it should proceed:
I'll pray a thousand prayers for thy death,
No word to save thee.'

A friar—the Duke in disguise—has overheard the conversation, and, by his advice, Isabel feigns to consent to Angelo's terms; but, instead of going to him in the dark to the appointed place, she sends Mariana, whom Angelo had deserted, and he is deceived. Nevertheless, Angelo does not mean to keep his bargain, but Claudio is saved by the interposition of the Duke, and

Angelo's villainy is exposed. No other play—not even 'Troilus'—seems to display such a disgust with human nature, and the 'happy' ending, which unites Angelo and Mariana in marriage, is singularly revolting after the sordidnesses of the plot. The Duke, a most foolishly clever personage, whose actions seem—a most rare thing with Shakespeare—to be governed by the exigencies of the plot, weds the spotless Isabella. Among the minor characters, the loathsome Barnardine, the brutal gaol-bird, is a very powerful creation. Finally, in this series of bitter comedies, comes 'Troilus and Cressida,' the play which tells of the young Trojan's love for the light Cressid, and his disillusioning, and which gives us the fine pictures of the Greek and Trojan camps, and the matchless figures of the go-between Pandarus and the railing Thersites. It is a disjointed, carelessly-constructed play, and, in spite of its many fine passages, not on the whole pleasant to read.

We turn from these tragic comedies to see what other Tragedies of the third period. work belongs to this third period. It is the time of the production of Shakespeare's greatest tragedies.

So far his only tragedy (not reckoning 'Titus' and the 'Histories') had been the passionate love-play of 'Romeo.' To about the same time as when he was writing 'Twelfth Night' belongs 'Julius Caesar'; nearly contemporary with 'All's Well' is 'Hamlet.' Shakespeare 'Hamlet.' wrote now, says Professor Dowden, 'as a man of mature powers, and as a thinker. In his histories he had been dealing with the real world—the world of action. In these two tragedies he studied the failure, in practical affairs, of two men, Brutus and Hamlet, who are called to the performance of great actions, but who are disqualified, the one for acting wisely, the other for acting energetically. Hamlet and Brutus fail, yet we honour them; they fall as martyrs or victims to duties imposed upon them, as it were, by fate, and which become burdens too heavy for them to bear. These two tragedies are tragedies of reflection. Shakespeare is not yet caught up by the passionate wind of his own imagination. Everything is thought out and wrought out deliberately in these two plays.' They are followed by the half-dozen great tragedies, through

which the 'passionate wind of his imagination' blows loud and strong, the tragedies which deal not with the sad ending of love that miscarries through mischance, not with the punishment that comes upon a man unequal to the burthen the gods lay on him, but with the terrible results of yielding to the wickeder passions, the Nemesis that waits upon crime.

Othello. In 'Othello,' the passion of jealousy which the dramatist had before handled with broad merriment—Ford in the 'Merry Wives'—or half contemptuously (in 'Troilus'), is made the instrument which the fiendish subtle Iago¹ uses to cause the noble Moor to kill 'the sweetest innocent that e'er did lift up eye.' In 'Macbeth' it is an ambitious wife who fashions her husband to desperate deeds for power; crowns are their rewards for a brief space—to be worn by a woman haunted by memories which drive her first to madness, then to destruction; by a man whose finer elements grow less and less as one act and one fear drive him to another, till he becomes a mere wild gambler playing

'Lear.' a losing game. In 'King Lear' we have, perhaps, the grandest production of Shakespeare's genius. The story,—taken from the Chronicle—is that of the doting old king, who intends to divide his kingdom (of Britain) between his three daughters, giving each such share as their love for him seems to deserve. To Goneril and Regan, who protest boundless affection, he gives half the kingdom each, making portionless Cordelia, the truthful, unflattering daughter, who loves him most and protests least. 'In preparing us for the most intense sympathy with this old man,' says Hallam, 'Shakespeare first abases him to the ground; it is not Oedipus against whose respected age the gods themselves have conspired; it is not Orestes, noble-minded and affectionate, whose crime has been virtue; it is a headstrong, feeble and selfish king whom, in the first act of the tragedy, nothing seems capable of redeeming in our eyes; nothing but what follows—intense woe, unnatural wrong.' Cordelia is married (dowry-less) by the King of France, and departs

¹ Iago, says Hazlitt, is 'an amateur of tragedy in real life, and instead of exercising his ingenuity on imaginary characters or long-forgotten incidents, he takes the bolder and more desperate course of getting up his plot at home, casts the principal parts among his nearest friends and connections, and rehearses it in downright earnest with steady nerves and unabated resolution.'

with him; the fiendish natures of her sisters are soon manifest. They treat the old man who has stripped himself for them with scorn; they refuse to maintain him and his retinue, as had been agreed. Thus, when Goneril insists that he shall only have fifty knights instead of a hundred, and he curses her in wrath, Regan declares that she will put up with no more than twenty-five.

Lear. I gave you all—

Reg. And in good time you gave it.

Lear. Made you my guardians, my depositaries;
But kept a reservation to be followed

With such a number. What, must I come to you
With five and twenty, Regan? said you so?

Reg. And speak 't again, my lord; no more with me.

Lear. Those wicked creatures yet do look well-favoured!
When others are more wicked, not being the worst
Stand in some rank of praise. [*To Gon.*] I'll go with thee:
Thy fifty yet doth double five and twenty,
And thou art twice her love.

Gon. Hear me, my lord:

What need you five and twenty, ten, or five,
To follow in a house where twice so many
Have a command to tend you?

Reg. What need one?

Lear. O! reason not the need: our basest beggars
Are in the poorest thing superfluous:
Allow not nature more than nature needs,
Man's life's as cheap as beast's: thou art a lady;
If only to go warm were gorgeous,
Why, nature needs not what thou gorgeous wearest,
Which scarcely keeps thee warm. But for true need,—
You heavens, give me that patience, patience I need!
You see me here, you gods, a poor old man,
As full of grief as age; wretched in both:
If it be you that stir these daughters' hearts
Against their father, fool me not so much
To bear it tamely; touch me with noble anger.
O! let not any woman's weapons, water-drops,
Stain my man's cheeks! No, you unnatural hags,
I will have such revenges on you both,
That all the world shall—I will do such things,—
What they are, yet I know not; but they shall be
The terrors of the earth. You think I'll weep;
No, I'll not weep:—
I have full cause of weeping, but this heart
Shall break into a hundred thousand flaws,
Or ere I'll weep. O fool, I shall go mad!

He goes into the stormy, thunderous night with the faithful fool; we hear him in his frenzy addressing the angry powers of Nature:—

'Rumble thy bellyful! Spit, fire! spout, rain!
Nor rain, wind, thunder, fire, are my daughters:
I tax not you, you elements, with unkindness:
I never gave you kingdom, called you children,
You owe me no subscription: then, let fall
Your horrible pleasure; here I stand, your slave,
A poor, infirm, weak, and despised old man:
But yet I call you servile ministers,
That have with two pernicious daughters joined
Your high engendered battles 'gainst a head
So old and white as this.'

By the aid of the Earl of Kent, who, disguised as a servant, has followed Lear, Cordelia, with the armies of France, comes to the help of her father, whom she finds now utterly mad. In the sequel, Regan is poisoned by Goneril, for jealousy of the love of Edmund, Gloucester's bastard son,—Edmund, who had caused his father to drive out his legitimate son Edgar, the feigning mad 'poor Tom,' who accompanies Lear in his wild wanderings. Goneril herself, being detected in crime, dies by her own hand. But Cordelia and Lear before this had been taken prisoners by Edmund. Edmund is overthrown in single combat by Edgar, but not in time to save Cordelia's life. 'Look on her,' cries Lear, 'look there, look there!' and falls dying. 'He faints!' cries Edgar:—

Kent. Break, heart; I pr'ythee, break!

Edg.

Look up, my lord!

Kent. Vex not his ghost: O, let him pass! he hates him
much,

That would upon the rack of this tough world
Stretch him out longer.'

'Antony and Cleopatra,' 'Coriolanus,' and 'Timon of Athens' conclude the work of this period. Perhaps 'Timon' is the first of these; and it is not unlikely that its place is immediately after 'Lear,' with which Coleridge compares it. 'It is,' says he, 'a Lear of the satirical drama; a Lear of domestic or ordinary life; a local eddy of passion on the high road of society, while all around is the week-day goings-on of wind and

weather; a Lear, therefore, without its soul-searching flashes, its ear-cleaving thunder-claps, its meteoric splendours.' It tells the story of the wealthy prodigal who loses his friends with his riches, and his faith in human nature along with them. When he has found out that none of those he lavished his goods on in former days will stand by him in his need, and has tested the depth of their baseness while humiliating them, he departs to live in the woods,—

'where he shall find

The unkindest beast more kinder than mankind,'

breathing deep curses on Athens as he goes. Digging for roots, he comes on a buried treasure. He has no desire for it, since he will never live among men again; but he finds a use for it by helping with it the exiled captain Alcibiades, who comes by on his way to attack Athens. The report of Timon's treasure brings parasites round him again, whom he taunts and drives away with blows. The attack of Alcibiades brings to him the Athenian senators, begging him—for he has been a great commander—to rescue their city. He sends them back with derision:

' . . . Tell my friends,

Tell Athens, in the sequence of degree,
From high to low throughout, that whoso please
To stop affliction, let him take his haste,
Come hither, ere my tree hath felt the axe,
And hang himself.'

He dies in his isolation, cursing the world, and beseeching their curses as the hater of all living men. The tale of Timon's errors and wrongs is in Plutarch's Life of Antony; and, about this time, the same biography yielded the dramatist material for the second of the Roman tragedies,

'Antony and Cleopatra,' where the Roman soldier's sensual passion, and the Egyptian queen's charms, working out their own and each other's ruin, are the groundwork of the play; and for the third and last, 'Coriolanus,' with its great delineation of the stern, self-confident, over-haughty patrician, who imagines he is of different clay from his humbler fellow-man, and pays for his error with his life.

they reached Tyre. He gives her in charge of Cleon, governor of Tarsus, who is under deep obligations to him. When Marina grows up, the governor's wife determines (through jealousy for her own daughter) to destroy her. She is about to be murdered by a hired assassin on the seashore—the sound of the sea is heard throughout the play—when some pirates dash down, carry her off, and sell her to a vile dealer in Mytilene. She passes through many perils unharmed and unsullied, until at last, by strange chance, she meets her father, and they discover their relationship. To Pericles Diana appears in a vision, bidding him go and offer up sacrifice at Ephesus, and tell his story publicly there. This he does, and Thaisa hears him, and knows her mourned husband. Shipwreck, separation, and

reunion are likewise the theme of 'The Winter's Tale'; but here the cause of the sufferings of Hermione the queen is not mere misfortune, but foolish jealousy on the part of her husband Leontes. He plots against the life of his friend Polixenes, who escapes to his kingdom of Bohemia, and casts Hermione into prison, where her daughter Perdita is born. The child is (by the king's orders) taken out to sea, and left on the shore of Bohemia, the man who took her perishing. Hermione, fainting under her husband's harshness, is supposed by him dead, and now he suffers the remorse that he well deserves. Perdita, found by a shepherd, is brought up as his child. Florizel, son of Polixenes, falls in love with her, and flees with her—to escape his father's anger at such a low-born match—to the court of Leontes, where finally all secrets are revealed, and Hermione, who had been living in secret 'Cymbeline,' with a faithful lady, is restored to Leontes. For the plot of 'Cymbeline,' Shakespeare took a legend of a British king, and combined it with an Italian love story. Once more, we have a husband (Posthumus) roused to causeless jealousy of a spotless wife; once more, a girl (Imogen) dressing herself in the garments of a boy; and, once more, reconciliation and peace at the close. There is, perhaps, no more delightful play to read than this; no fresher, sweeter character among all Shakespeare's creations than its heroine, Imogen. Here is the dirge the two young

sons of Cymbeline sing over 'Fidele' (Imogen in disguise), when they suppose her dead :—

' *Guiderius*. Fear no more the heat o' the sun,
Nor the furious winter's rages :
Thou thy worldly task hast done,
Home art gone, and ta'en thy wages :
Golden lads and girls all must,
As chimney-sweepers, come to dust.

' *Arviragus*. Fear no more the frown o' the great,
Thou art past the tyrant's stroke ;
Care no more to clothe and eat ;
To thee the reed is as the oak :
The sceptre, learning, physic, must
All follow this, and come to dust.

' *G.* Fear no more the lightning-flash,
A. Nor the all-dreaded thunder-stone ;
G. Fear not slander, censure rash ;
A. Thou hast finished joy and moan :
Both. All lovers young, all lovers must
Consign to thee, and come to dust.

' *G.* No exorciser harm thee !
A. Nor no witchcraft charm thee !
G. Ghost unlaid forbear thee !
A. Nothing ill come near thee !
Both. Quiet consummation have ;
And renowned be thy grave !'

Fall of sweet song is the last of the plays we touch on here—'The Tempest,' which (like Shakespeare's part of 'Pericles') opens with a storm at sea, and ends, like all these later dramas, with tranquillity and peace upon earth. The tempest casts up Antonio, the usurping Duke of Milan, and his friends on the island where his brother Prospero, the lawful duke, lives with his daughter Miranda, who has never seen any man save her father. Prospero's wise art is such that the spirits of the air obey him, and delicate Ariel, by his orders, has raised the present storm. No one is drowned, but they are separated, in order to further Prospero's wise ends ; for his purpose is to show his wicked brother the baseness of his conduct ; to punish, with mild severity, him and the King of Naples, who had helped him ; and to grant pardon finally, and close the long feud with reconciliation, by giving Miranda in marriage to

young Ferdinand, the king's son. Marvellous among all Shakespeare's marvellous creations is the monster Caliban, the son of the witch Sycorax, the terrible clod whom Prospero controls by his magic arts, but whom even he cannot impress with 'any print of goodness.' If, as some hold, this play was the last Shakespeare meant to write, there is perhaps special meaning in the great magician's words in the last act:—

'I have bedimmed
The noontide sun, called forth the mutinous winds,
And 'twixt the green sea and the azured vault
Set roaring war : to the dread rattling thunder
Have I given fire, and rifted Jove's stout oak
With his own bolt : the strong-based promontory
Have I made shake : and by the spurs plucked up
The pine and cedar : graves, at my command,
Have waked their sleepers, oped, and let 'em forth
By my so potent art. *But this rough magic
I here abjure. . . .*

. . . *I'll break my staff,
Bury it certain fathoms in the earth,
And, deeper than did ever plummet sound,
I'll drown my book.'*

Perhaps, too, deeper thoughts than those connected with the mere success of the play breathe through the epilogue which Prospero speaks:—

'Now my charms are all o'erthrown,
And what strength I have's mine own,
Which is most faint . . .
. . . Now I want
Spirits to enforce, art to enchant;
And my ending is despair,
Unless I be relieved by prayer,
Which pierces so, that it assaults
Mercy itself, and frees all faults.
As you from crimes would pardoned be
Let your indulgence set me free.'

It remains to say a few words on two other plays. The first of these is 'King Henry VIII.,' which was ^{'Henry VIII.'} printed as Shakespeare's in the folio of 1623, ^{'Two Noble Kinsmen.'} and seems to have been written about 1613. The general opinion of critics appears to be that it is the work of two dramatists, of whom one was Fletcher and the other

Shakespeare, though there are some who hold that Shakespeare had no hand in it. The play certainly differs widely from the other 'histories,' lacking unity of interest, and being a succession of scenes rather than a drama. The finest character, however, the injured majestic queen, is one that might rank with the best of Shakespeare's creations; and Wolsey and the king are hardly less well-conceived and well-executed. The 'Two Noble Kinsmen'—the Palamon and Arcite of Chaucer's *Knight's Tale*—was not included by Shakespeare's first editors among his works (nor was 'Pericles'), but appeared in 1634, under the names of Fletcher and Shakespeare. 'While the evidence of two hands in the play is convincing, the most competent critics,' says Professor Dowden, 'hesitate to make the assertion that either of the writers was Shakespeare.'¹

Besides the plays and the poems already discussed, Shakespeare has left us two or three shorter poems and The Sonnets. a collection of over a hundred and fifty sonnets, published in 1509, and written, it is thought, at various times during the fifteen or twenty years preceding that date. Into the question as to how far they are autobiographical, or as to the connection of one with another, we need not enter here. It is sufficient to point out that they deal with love, and express the lover's mood in many different aspects; and that for perfection of form, for choiceness of expression, and for the harmony of their cadences, they rank with the best of his work. We can find room for but two specimens. The student will notice that, as each of these poems consists of three quatrains and a couplet, they are not what are technically now known as sonnets:—

'O, for my sake do thou with Fortune chide,
The guilty goddess of my harmful deeds,
That did not better for my life provide
Than public means, which public manners breeds.

¹ A number of other plays have been at various times ascribed to Shakespeare of which probably none was touched by him. Among these are: 'The London Prodigal,' 'Thomas Lord Cromwell,' 'Sir John Oldcastle,' 'The Puritan Widow,' 'A Yorkshire Tragedy,' and 'Loocrine' (all published in the 1664 folio); and 'Fair Emm,' 'George-a-Green,' 'The Merry Devil of Edmonton,' 'Arden of Feversham,' 'Mucedorus,' 'The Birth of Merlin,' 'Larum for London,' 'Warning for Fair Women.'

Thence comes it that my name receives a brand,
 And almost thence my nature is subdued
 To what it works in, like the dyer's hand :
 Pity me, then, and wish I were renewed ;

Whilst, like a willing patient, I will drink
 Potions of eisel 'gainst my strong infection,
 No bitterness that I will bitter think,
 Nor double penance, to correct correction.

Pity me, then, dear friend, and I assure ye
 Even that your pity is enough to cure me.'

'Let me not to the marriage of true minds
 Admit impediments. Love is not love
 Which alters when it alteration finds,
 Or bends with the remover to remove :

O no ! it is an ever-fixed mark,
 That looks on tempests, and is never shaken ;
 It is the star to every wandering bark,
 Whose worth's unknown, although his height be taken.

Love's not Time's fool, though rosy lips and cheeks
 Within his bending sickle's compass come ;
 Love alters not with his brief hours and weeks,
 But bears it out even to the edge of doom.

If this be error, and upon me proved,
 I never writ, nor no man ever loved.'

Libraries of comment and criticism upon Shakespeare have been written ; but it seems well-nigh impossible to select any short extract which will in any way adequately characterise his genius. It may be well, perhaps, just to point out here that it is commonly recognised that one thing at least, which distinguishes him from all others, is his 'universality.' One author may sometimes exhibit a power of creating a character comparable to his, another may sometimes equal him in imagination, a third in humour, and so forth ; but such a multiplicity of gifts, which, combined, make the greatest literature, seems never to have been so bestowed on any other but him. 'He was the man,' says Dryden, 'who, of all modern and perhaps ancient poets, had the largest and most comprehensive soul.' All the images of Nature were still [*i.e.*, ever] present to him, and he drew

them not laboriously but luckily [*i.e.*, as if by genius only]. When he describes anything, you more than see it: you feel it too. Those who accuse him to have wanted learning give him the greater commendation. He was naturally learned; he needed not the spectacles of books to read Nature; he looked inwards, and found her there. I cannot say he is everywhere alike. . . . But he is always great, when some great occasion is presented to him. No man can say he ever had a fit subject for his wit [genius], and did not then raise himself as high above the rest of poets, *quantum lenta solent inter viburna cupressi.*'

CHAPTER XV.

THE DRAMA. — BEN JONSON, BEAUMONT AND FLETCHER, MIDDLETON, HEYWOOD, WEBSTER, FORD, MASSINGER, SHIRLEY, ETC.

BEN JONSON was the posthumous son of a man of good Ben Jonson, descent. His mother married a second time, and 1573-1637. Ben seems to have worked for some time at his stepfather's trade—that of bricklayer or builder. He had received a very good classical education at Westminster School under Camden, and is thought by some to have been for a short time at Cambridge. He left bricks to try his fortune as a soldier, serving with the English troops in the Low Countries; returned to London about 1596, married, and began to write for the stage in order to earn a living, working at odd jobs for Henslowe, and perhaps sometimes acting. In 1598 he killed an actor, probably in a duel, and was sent to prison; there he was converted to Roman Catholicism, and remained in that faith for a dozen years. At the close of 1598 he began his career as the author of original comedies, with 'Every Man in his Humour,' which was produced at the Globe Theatre, in which Shakespeare had a share; there is a tradition that the greater dramatist exerted his influence to have Jonson's work brought forward. Then followed the satirical plays and the quarrel with Marston, Dekker and others, which we treat more fully below. In spite of the abuse they showered on one another, the feud does not seem to have been lasting, as we find his most savage opponent, Marston, dedicating a play to him in 1604, while Dekker and Jonson collaborate in a masque in the same year. He was in prison for a short time in 1605, on a charge of being concerned with Marston and Chapman in writing

against the Scots in 'Eastward Ho,' in which, however, he declared he had no part. While there, it is said that his mother prepared poison, which she intended to give him, should he have been sentenced to ignominious mutilation.¹ About this time he began to be regarded as one of the chief of men of letters, and later on we find him in the position of sovereign ruler over the world of genius and talent that congregated in the London taverns. Between 1605 and 1616 he produced much enduring work, besides a large number of masques; in the last-mentioned year he abandoned the drama in disgust, and only returned to it on the pressure of necessity. He had some income from royal and noble patronage, but his condition was never prosperous, and his declining years were spent in indigence. He was surrounded, however, by a court of ardent admirers, and many young authors delighted to be 'of the tribe of Ben,' and to be hailed by him as his 'sons.'

The hack work which he did for the players in his early years included a touching up of 'The Spanish Tragedy,' that example of the pre-Shakespearian tragedy of rant and blood noticed in connection with Kyd (p. 203). 'Like Shakespeare,' says Mr. J. A. Symonds, 'he had to mend imperfect scenes, to furnish additions for plays which were becoming stale, to improve faulty verses, and, what was even more important, to take his part in representation on the stage. All the plays with which the two leaders of the English drama had to deal in these years of their apprenticeship were romantic. All bore the mark to some degree of Marlowe's manner. Shakespeare contented himself with bringing the romantic style to the very height of perfection in "Othello," "King Lear," and "The Winter's Tale." Jonson, on the contrary, swerved aside from that tradition. It is, indeed, true that even his most regular plays are influenced by the romantic spirit of the age. Yet he strove to strike out for himself a

¹ The story—like many others about Ben Jonson—is told by William Drummond of Hawthornden, with whom the dramatist stayed for a short time during a visit to Scotland. Drummond took notes of his conversations: he was himself a poet, and has left us some pretty sonnets and songs, and a considerable amount of prose, of which his 'Cypress Grove' is esteemed the best example.

new method, which should adhere more closely to classical models, and exemplify classical rules more nicely than that of his master Marlowe, or that of his incomparable friend and fellow-worker Shakespeare. To a large extent he succeeded, and his best comedies form a dramatic species which has no analogue in Elizabethan literature.'

The first of Jonson's original plays preserved to us is his 'Every Man in his Humour,' which was acted in 1598. It is a brisk comedy of character, with a slender plot designed to make 'sport with human follies, not with crimes,' written in accordance, as far as possible, with the rules that governed the classic comic stage. Each personage has some individual 'humour' or 'extravagant habit, passion or affection, particular to some one person, by the oddness of which he is immediately distinguished from the rest of men,' and to exhibit them under the control of this mastering characteristic was one of Jonson's main ideas of the comedian's function. He followed up his success with 'Every Man out of his Humour' in the next year, the first of his 'Comic Satires,' as he termed them, in which he ridiculed some of his brother playwrights with brutal strength and no small amount of self-complacency. Marston may have intended to lampoon Jonson in his scurrilous 'Satires' and his 'Scourge of Villainy' (see p. 280); both he and Dekker felt themselves aggrieved by this play and 'Cynthia's Revels'—the second of the Comic Satires—in which Jonson delineates the character of the true poet and his aims, as contrasted with the mere panderer to popular favour. His own sterling honesty of purpose and lofty notion of the playwright's function as a teacher are evident enough in all his work; but on the other hand his independence is constantly expressed with overweening pride, and his scorn of others with extraordinary violence. He had probably poured his noisy ridicule on others besides Dekker, Marston, and Munday—the last-named figures in 'The Case is Altered,'—and his foes naturally retorted. Their attacks brought down upon them 'The Poetaster: or 'The Arraignment,' written hurriedly to forestall another assault which the other side was known to be preparing. In this play, which was

produced in 1601, the scene is the Rome of the great Augustan age, where we meet Cæsar, Mæcenas, Ovid, Virgil, Tibullus, and Horace, who is Ben himself; a good deal of Jonson's somewhat ponderous learning, which elsewhere he seems to display pedantically at times, here finds a sufficiently fitting place. The 'poetaster' of the play—Jonson has incorporated the word with the English language—is one Crispinus [Marston], who with his fellow-jingler Demetrius [Dekker] is solemnly arraigned, in the fifth act, on a charge which is thus formulated in the indictment read by Tibullus:—

'You are, before this time, jointly and severally indicted, and here presently to be arraigned upon the statute of calumny, or *Lex Remmia*, the one by the name of Rufus Laberius Crispinus, *alias* Crispinus, poetaster and plagiarist; the other by the name of Demetrius Fannius, play-dresser and plagiarist; that you (not having the fear of Phœbus or his shafts before your eyes), . . . have most ignorantly, foolishly, and most like yourselves, maliciously gone about to deprave and calumniate the person and writings of Quintus Horatius Flaccus, here present, poet, and priest to the Muses, and to that end have mutually conspired and plotted, at sundry times, as by several means, and in sundry places, for the better accomplishing your base and envious purpose, taxing him falsely of self-love, arrogancy, impudence, railing, filching by translation, etc.'

As for the charge of 'filching by translation,' it may be well to point out here that in a sense Jonson is constantly laying himself open to it. His knowledge of the classics was more profound than that of any of his contemporaries; his admiration for them extreme, and his fondness for adapting and refashioning is constantly apparent. Unlike Shakespeare, who took his stories where he found them, Jonson carefully constructed new and original and often elaborate plots; but in working them out his memory suggested to him devices, passages, and phrases of his loved masters, which he promptly transferred to his own pages. 'He was deeply conversant in the ancients, both Greek and Latin, and he borrowed boldly from them,' says Dryden: 'there is scarce a poet or historian among the Roman authors of those times whom he has not translated in "*Sejanus*" and "*Catiline*." But he has done his robberies so openly that one may see he fears not to be taxed by any law. He invades authors like a monarch; and what would be

theft in other poets is only victory in him. With the spoils of these writers, he so represents old Rome to us in its rites, ceremonies and customs, that if one of their own poets had written either of his tragedies, we had seen less of it than in him.'

'The Poetaster' brought Marston and Dekker down upon its author with 'Satiromastix, or the Untrussing of the Humorous Poet,' and it made him enemies among those who felt their professions ridiculed in Tucca, the swaggering soldier, Ovid Senior, the lawyer, Mistrisio [Henslowe], the player, etc. Jonson determined to give up comedy-writing for a time, and turned to tragedy, producing the 'Sejanus, his Fall,' mentioned above, in 1603; his only other tragedy has also been alluded to: this is 'Catilino's Conspiracy,' which was acted in 1611. Passing over these, which, interesting as they are, are not among his masterpieces, we come to the great comedies 'Volpone, or the Fox' (1605), a dreadful and almost ferocious study and picture of avarice and lust; 'The Alchemist' (1610), a fine social satire on a flourishing species of knaves and fools; 'Bartholomew Fair' (1614), a broadly farcical descriptive play, full of vivid painting of the great popular London festival; and 'Epicæne; or, The Silent Woman' (1609), a purely ludicrous comedy of rough mirth. The fun of 'Epicæne' hinges on the 'humour' of crusty old Morose, who nourishes an equal hatred for noise and for his nephew Dauphine. To spite the latter, he means to marry, so that Dauphine may not profit by being his nearest kinsman; but he fears the tongue of a wife. By Dauphine's means, the silent girl Epicæne is introduced to him; and Morose is so charmed with her taciturnity and her soft low voice, in the few words she utters, that he straightway weds her, having first to undergo the infliction of the noisy hubbub of Dauphine and his companions on the joyous occasion. The marriage ceremony over, Epicæne develops an unlooked-for and abundant loquacity, which, combined with the chatter and quarrels of Dauphine's confederates, Truewit and Otter, Sir John Daw and La Foole, Dol Mavis and her friends, nearly drives old Morose wild. Distraction upon distraction are heaped on the wretched husband, who seeks the help of the

law to try and get a separation, but in vain, though he is ready to resort to the most shameless expedients to be rid of his torment. Even the vain, lying La Foole's and Daw's declarations, that they have rendered Epiccene unfit to be an honest man's wife, are of no avail, since the alleged offences were committed before the marriage. At last, the nephew promises to free his uncle, on condition of being granted a large allowance and made absolute heir. Morose consents gladly, wondering how it can be done. Then Dauphine reveals the plot he has made with Epiccene, of which the others, and the audience, are unaware,—Epiccene is a boy in girl's clothing.

None of Jonson's later plays is very remarkable, except 'The Devil is an Ass,' and the beautiful and unfinished pastoral play 'The Sad Shepherd.' They include the 'Staple of News,' acted in 1625,—'produced, perhaps, at the call of want, certainly bearing the marks of old age,'¹—'The New Inn,' 'The Magnetic Lady,' and other work, which Dryden calls 'his dotages.'

A species of dramatic entertainment, into which Ben Jonson threw himself heartily, was the masque, of which he produced some two score. As a lyricist, he has left us many examples of his power; and a few of them have earned high praise, as, for example, the dainty song in 'Epiccene':—

'Still to be neat, still to be drest,
As you were going to a feast;
Still to be powdered, still perfumed;
Lady, it is to be presumed,
Though art's hid causes are not found,
All is not sweet, all is not sound.

'Give me a look, give me a face,
That makes simplicity a grace;
Robes loosely flowing, hair as free,
Such sweet neglect more taketh me
Than all the adulteries of art:
They strike mine eye, but not my heart.'

In his collection of miscellaneous poems, entitled 'The Forest,' is to be found the famous 'Drink to me only with thine Eyes'; and 'Underwoods' contains several beautiful

¹ Ward.

poems. We will quote here some of the famous lines 'To the Memory of my beloved Master William Shakespeare, and what he hath left us,' which were prefixed to the first folio edition of Shakespeare's works :—

'Triumph, my Britain, thou hast one to show,
To whom all scenes of Europe homage owe.
He was not of an age, but for all time !
And all the Muses still were in their prime,
When, like Apollo, he came forth to warm
Our ears, or like a Mercury to charm !
Nature herself was proud of his designs,
And joyed to wear the dressing of his lines,
Which were so richly spun, and woven so fit,
As, since, she will vouchsafe no other wit.
The merry Greek, tart Aristophanes,
Neat Terence, witty Plautus, now not please ;
But antiquated and deserted lie,
As they were not of Nature's family.
Yet must I not give Nature all : thy art,
My gentle Shakespeare, must enjoy a part ;
For, though the poet's matter nature be,
His art doth give the fashion ; and that he
Who casts to write a living line must sweat
(Such as thine are) and strike the second heat
Upon the Muse's anvil, turn the same,
And himself with it, that he thinks to frame ;
Or for the laurel he may gain to scorn ;
For a good poet's made as well as born.
And such wert thou !—

Among Jonson's other works are a collection of short poems known as 'Epigrams,' some translations from the Latin poets, and the interesting book of notes on various subjects, entitled 'Timber ; or, Discoveries made upon Men and Matter.' Here is his note on Bacon :—

'My conceit [*i.e.*, opinion] of his person was never increased toward him by his place or honours ; but I have and do reverence him for the greatness that was only proper to himself, in that he seemed to me ever, by his work, one of the greatest men, and most worthy of admiration, that had been in many ages. In his adversity, I ever prayed that God would give him strength, for greatness he could not want. Neither could I condole in a word or syllable for him, as knowing no accident could do harm to virtue, but rather help to make it manifest.'

We look upon Shakespeare, now, as practically beyond comparison with any other ; but, with his own contemporaries,

Ben Jonson and Beaumont and Fletcher were, perhaps, scarcely less esteemed. Dryden, whose estimate of Shakespeare we have already quoted, praises Jonson as 'the most learned and judicious writer which any theatre ever had. . . . Wit and language and humour also, in some measure, we had before him; but something of art was wanting to the drama till he came. He managed his strength to more advantage than any who preceded him. You seldom find him making love in any of his scenes, or endeavouring to move the passions; his genius was too sullen and saturnine to do it gracefully, especially when he knew he came after those who had performed both to such a height.' A splendid workman with a thorough knowledge of the art and science of his craft, when he followed the natural bent of his genius for satire and satiric burlesque, he produced masterpieces.

The most popular playwrights of the reigns of James I. and his successor, and those who influenced the course of the drama in the Restoration period most, were neither Shakespeare nor Jonson, but the two friends and fellow-workers whose names are indissolubly linked together,—Beaumont and Fletcher. Fletcher was some half-dozen years older than his partner, whom he outlived by a decade; and to him are addressed most of the exaggerated poetical compliments for excellence in the drama, which it was then the custom to address to successful writers. Their joint production, however, was so considerable and popular, and the difficulty of separating the work of the one from the other is in many cases so great (and in many insuperable), that it is best to treat them together.

The main facts of their biographies are the following: John Fletcher's father was head of Bene't College (now Corpus), Cambridge, subsequently Bishop of Bristol, and ultimately Bishop of London. The Fletchers were a literary family, the Bishop being a man of learning, and his brother Giles, with his sons Giles and Phineas, of some account in the history of literature (see p. 278). John Fletcher appears to have been educated at Bene't College, and to have had little or no inheritance. He probably began to write for the stage about 1606, and it is likely that his first

ventures were made in partnership with Francis Beaumont. Beaumont, like Fletcher, was a 'gentleman' by birth and breeding, and, like him, belonged to a family with a turn for literary pursuits, though none of his kin reached any particular eminence therein. Francis Beaumont, after an Oxford education, became a student of the Inner Temple—his father, Sir Francis Beaumont, of Gracedieu, in Leicestershire, was a judge—but did not pursue the law seriously. Unlike most of his fellow dramatists, he seems to have been a man of means, and not to have taken to playwriting for the purpose of getting a livelihood. The two dramatists are reported to have lived in the closest intimacy, and the attempts that have been made to distinguish their respective contributions to their joint works have not been crowned with marked success. According to tradition, Beaumont was the critical spirit, and Fletcher the inventive; but how far the tradition is true it is impossible to make out. The publisher of the first collected edition (1646) tells us, 'It was once in my thoughts to have printed Master Fletcher's works by themselves; . . . but, since never parted while they lived, I conceived it not equitable to separate their ashes.' It is most probable that even then the ash-sifting process could not be well carried out; so, at least, one gathers from some of the commendatory verses prefixed to the volume, as, for example, those in which Jasper Maine declares that—

' . . . if we praise you rightly, we must say
Both joined, and both did wholly make the play,

that 'we, in all things that you did, but one thread see,' and speaks of them as 'one poet in a pair of friends.' Fletcher probably died a bachelor. Beaumont married in 1613; and the community in life, so graphically described by a standard gossip, must then have come to an end. After Beaumont's death, Fletcher continued to write; and a good deal of the work which belongs to this period has been identified. Fletcher, it may be added, collaborated with others, both before and after his partnership with Beaumont. Massinger was one of his coadjutors; and attempts have been made, as we have noticed, to assign to Fletcher a share with

Shakespeare in 'King Henry VIII.' and 'The Two Noble Kinsmen.'

The total number of plays assigned to these two authors, jointly and separately, is over fifty. Among these some of the more famous are: 'Philaster,' 'The Knight of the Burning Pestle,' 'A King and No King,' 'The Scornful Lady,' 'The Knight of Malta,' and 'The Maid's Tragedy.'¹ From the last mentioned, we quote part of the scene where the wronged Aspatia descants to her women on the faithlessness of man:—

'Aspatia. Did you ne'er love yet, wenches? Speak, Olympias; Thou hast an easy temper, fit for stamp.

Olym. Never.

Asp. Nor you, Antiphila?

Ant. Nor I.

Asp. Then, my good girls, be more than women wise: At least, be more than I was; and be sure You credit anything the light gives light to, Before a man. Rather believe the sea Weeps for the ruined merchant, when he roars; Rather, the wind courts but the pregnant sails, When the strong cordage cracks; rather, the sun Comes but to kiss the fruit in wealthy autumn, When all falls blasted. If you needs must love, Forced by ill-fate, take to your maiden bosoms Two dead-cold aspics, and of them make lovers: They cannot flatter, nor forswear; one kiss Makes a long peace for all. But man, Oh, that beast man! Come, let's be sad, my girls! That down cast of thine eyes, Olympias, Shows a fine sorrow. Mark, Antiphila; Just such another was the nymph C'enone, When Paris brought home Helen. Now a tear; And then thou art a piece expressing fully The Carthage queen, when from a cold sea-rock, Full with her sorrow, she tied fast her eyes To the fair Trojan ships; and, having lost them, Just as thine eyes do, down stole a tear. Antiphila, What would this wench do, if she were Aspatia? Here she would stand, till some more pitying god Turned her to marble!

Of the tragi-comedy 'Philaster,' it may be interesting to give a short descriptive account of the plot here. The hero is the heir to the throne of Sicily, which has been

¹ For a longer list, see Index (under Fletcher).

usurped by the King of Calabria. Philaster is allowed to remain about his court, and loves and is loved by Arethusa, the usurper's daughter, who is herself sought by Pharamond, Prince of Spain. Euphrasia, the daughter of a courtier, being enamoured of Philaster, and recognising the hopelessness of her passion, has disguised herself as a page, and entered the service of Philaster, by whom she is presented to Arethusa. Pharamond, while wooing the princess, is found enjoying grosser pleasures; and, on detection, his partner revengefully calumniates the princess for the relation declared to exist between her and her page, Bellario (*i.e.*, Euphrasia). The slanders are credited, Euphrasia having bound herself by vow not to reveal her sex; Philaster is reduced to desperation, and in his wrath inflicts a wound on Arethusa and Bellario. The latter, to shield him, claims to be the would-be murderer of the princess; but Philaster is believed to be implicated, and both are likely to be condemned to the scaffold. Arethusa begs that she may be constituted their gaoler, inasmuch as the attempt was against her life. When they appear in the court again, the princess tells her father,

‘This gentleman,
The prisoner that you gave me, is become
My keeper, and through all the bitter throes
Your jealousies and his ill-fate have wrought him,
Thus nobly hath he struggled, and at length
Avowed here my dear husband.’

‘Your dear husband!’ cries the king; ‘call in the captain of the citadel. There, you shall keep your wedding: . . . blood shall put out your torches.’ But the king's wrath is foiled by the rising of the people on behalf of their lawful ruler Philaster. The rebellion can only be put down by restoring him to liberty, and by his intercession. Pharamond is dismissed, and Philaster and Arethusa are to wed, and inherit the kingdom. For Bellario, such is the king's wrath, in regard to the scandals, that he would yet have the unfortunate page tortured and executed, in spite of the entreaties of Philaster, now thoroughly convinced of the baselessness of his suspicions; but, when the order is given that Bellario is to be stripped for the torture, the

disguised girl sees that she can now speak without breaking her vow, inasmuch as, if she does not, her secret will yet be revealed. 'Tell me,' says Philaster, after the first outburst of joy at this complete refutation of the slanders,—'tell me why thou didst conceal thy sex?'

Bellarion. My father oft would speak
Your worth and virtue; and, as I did grow
More and more apprehensive, I did thirst
To see the man so praised; but yet all this
Was but a maiden longing, to be lost
As soon as found; till, sitting in my window,
Printing my thoughts in lawn, I saw a god,
I thought—but it was you—enter our gates.
My blood flew out, and back again as fast,
As I had puffed it forth and sucked it in
Like breath. Then was I called away in haste
To entertain you. Never was a man,
Heaved from a sheep-cote to a sceptre, raised
So high in thoughts as I. You left a kiss
Upon these lips then, which I mean to keep
From you for ever. I did hear you talk,
Far above singing! After you were gone,
I grew acquainted with my heart, and searched
What stirred it so. Alas! I found it love,
Yet far from lust; for could I but have lived
In presence of you, I had had my end.
For this I did delude my noble father
With a feigned pilgrimage, and dressed myself
In habit of a boy; and, for I knew
My birth no match for you, I was past hope
Of having you: and understanding well
That, when I made discovery of my sex,
I could not stay with you, I made a vow
By all the most religious things a maid
Could call together, never to be known,
Whilst there was hope to hide me from men's eyes,
For other than I seemed, that I might ever
Abide with you. Then sat I by the fount
Where first you took me up.

King. Search out a match
Within our kingdom, where and when thou wilt,
And I will pay thy dowry; and thyself
Wilt well deserve him.

Bell. Never, sir, will I;
Marry; it is a thing within my vow:
But, if I may have leave to serve the princess,
To see the virtues of her lord and her,
I shall have hope to live.'

With regard to their skill in constructing plots, Hallam points out that the conclusions of their tragedies and tragicomedies are frequently forced and abrupt. 'A propensity to take the audience by surprise leads often to an unnatural and unsatisfactory catastrophe; it seems their aim to disappoint common expectation, to baffle reasonable conjecture, to mock natural sympathy. . . . The comic talents of these authors,' he says, 'far exceeded their skill in tragedy. In comedy, they founded a new school, at least in England. . . . Their plays are at once distinguishable from those of their contemporaries, by the regard to dramatic effect which influenced the writers' imagination. . . . Their incidents are numerous and striking, their characters sometimes slightly sketched, not drawn, like those of Jonson, from a preconceived design, but preserving that degree of individual distinctness which a common audience requires, and often highly humorous without extravagance; their language brilliant with wit; their measure . . . very lax and rapid . . . Few of their comedies are without a mixture of grave sentiments or elevated characters; and, though there is much to condemn in their indecency and even licentiousness of principle, they never descend to the coarse buffoonery not unfrequent in their age.'

After Ben Jonson and Fletcher, there is perhaps only one dramatist who may be regarded as of equal, or almost equal, rank with them, taking into account both the quality and quantity of the plays produced by each. This is Massinger, whose work begins in the second decade of the seventeenth century. Before we study this, we will glance at the writing of the chief of the innumerable 'minor' Elizabethan and Jacobean playwrights. Among these are

John
Marston
(see p. 280).

Dekker and Marston, of whom we spoke in connection with 'The Poetaster.' Marston's tragedies—'Antonio and Mellida,' 'The Insatiate Countess,' etc.—are turgid and bombastic; among his comedies, 'The Malcontent' has earned high praise. But the other author of 'Satiromastix' ranks higher among comedy-writers. He exhibits a vigorous breadth of humour and briskness of movement in 'The Shoemaker's Holiday,' 'Old Fortunatus,' and other plays, and

Thomas
Dekker,
c. 1570—
c. 1640.

has left good specimens of the delicacy of his lyric vein. In 'Patient Grissil,' a play written by 'various hands'¹—Dekker collaborated frequently with others, among whom were Webster, Middleton, and Massinger—occurs the following pretty 'Lullaby':—

'Golden slumbers kiss your eyes,
Smiles awake you when you rise.
Sleep, pretty wantons, do not cry,
And I will sing a lullaby.
Rock them, rock them, lullaby.

'Care is heavy, therefore sleep you
You are care, and care must keep you.
Sleep, pretty wantons, do not cry,
And I will sing a lullaby,
Rock them, rock them, lullaby.'

Dekker is also remembered for some curious writings on contemporary London life, including 'The Gull's Horn Book,' a sarcastic guide for young bloods to the manners and usages of polite society.

A comedy, of which George Chapman was part-author—viz., 'Eastward Ho!'—has already been referred to, in treating of Jonson's imprisonment. Among George Chapman, 1559—1634. his other comedies are: 'The Blind Beggar of Alexandria,' 'All Fools,' and 'Monsieur Olive.' His best plays, however, are probably his tragedies of 'Bussy d'Ambois' and 'The Revenge of Bussy d'Ambois.' But it is the non-dramatic portion of Chapman's writings that has made his name widely known to later generations, for he has left us renderings of the 'Odyssey' and the 'Iliad' which have not been altogether surpassed by later translators.

One of the most fertile of playwrights, and a typical example of the man of letters of the day, who could turn his pen to anything, is Thomas Heywood, 1570—c. 1650. wood, whose 'Woman Killed with Kindness' is the best known of his plays. He had an 'entire hand, or, at the least, a main finger,' in considerably over two hundred dramatic pieces; and, though his fertility is perhaps the most amazing fact in connection with him, yet he deserves to be remembered for his cleverness in introducing effective

¹ Probably Middleton, Chettle, and Haughton, with the aid of Dekker in the lyrics.

situations, his pathos, and a purity of thought and tone which raises him above most of his contemporaries.

Middleton, who has just been mentioned as a collaborator of Dekker's, has left us several remarkable plays. Thomas Middleton, c. 1570—1627. Perhaps the best of these is 'The Changeling,' which contains some horribly effective scenes, and

William Rowley. a couple of the most marvellously drawn characters—Beatrice-Joanna and De Flores—to be found in our dramatic literature. There is a comic story interwoven with the tragic, which does not add to the value of the play, from the modern reader's point of view. With Middleton, in 'The Changeling'—which was produced at least as early as 1623—William Rowley co-operated. The pair also worked together on 'The Spanish Gipsy' and 'A Fair Quarrel.' In 'The Roaring Girl,' Middleton's collaborator was Dekker. Middleton's play of 'The Witch' has attracted a good deal of attention, on account of the relation—the nature of which has not been ascertained—between it and 'Macbeth.' A most striking production of his genius is the 'Game of Chess' (produced in 1624), in which, with remarkable audacity, the dramatist brought on the stage an allegory dealing with the project of the Spanish marriage; under the transparent guise of black and white kings, pawns, knights, etc., represented the sovereigns and ministers of Spain and England; and did not hesitate to exhibit the discomfiture of the efforts of the Spaniards (black) which James I. was well known to favour. A minor dramatist of less note than the William Rowley here mentioned is Samuel Rowley, among whose plays is a 'Chronicle History of Henry VIII.'

The dates of Webster's birth and death are both unknown.

John Webster, c. 1580—c. 1650. In the first decade of the seventeenth century he appears to have begun to write for the stage, collaborating, after the usual manner, with other playwrights. His first masterpiece, 'The White Devil; or, Vittoria Corombona,' was acted in 1612; and another great play, 'The Duchess of Malfi,' was produced not long after (acted 1616). 'The Devil's Law Case' and 'Appius and Virginia' are less remarkable works of this writer, who, in the two plays previously mentioned, exhibits a wonderful

power of dealing with dark crimes and tragic passions. 'Webster has a superiority in delineating character above many of the old dramatists,' says Hallam. 'He is seldom extravagant beyond the limits of conceivable nature; we find the guilt, or even the atrocity, of human passions, but not that incarnation of evil spirits which some more ordinary dramatists love to exhibit. In the character of the Duchess of Malfi herself, there wants neither originality nor skill of management; and I do not know that any dramatist, after Shakespeare, would have succeeded better in the difficult scene where she discloses her love to an inferior.' We must not leave this play without quoting a few lines from the dialogue between Bosola, who has murdered the duchess with her children, and Ferdinand, one of her villainous brothers, who has caused Bosola to carry out his vengeance:—

Ferd. Is she dead?

Bos. She is what
You'd have her. But here begin your pity.
[*Shewing the bodies of the strangled children.*

Alas! how have these offended?

Ferd. The death of young wolves is never to be pitied.

Bos. Fix your eye here.

[*Shewing the body of the duchess.*

Ferd. Constantly.

Bos. Do you not weep?

Other sins only speak: murder shrieks out;
The element of water moistens the earth,
But blood flies upward and bedews the heavens.

Ferd. Cover her face; mine eyes dazzle: she died young.'

Of the circumstances of Massinger's life but little is known. He was the son of a retainer of the
Philip
Massinger,
1584—1638.
 Earl of Pembroke, and born at Salisbury. He was at Oxford from 1602 to 1606, after which he came to London, associated with players and playwrights, and began to write for a living. There is an interesting document preserved to us which shows us the straits to which he and his fellows were only too often reduced, and confirms the assertion that Massinger collaborated with Fletcher. The letter referred to was sent from prison to Henslowe, the manager, and is believed to have been written about 1614. Thus it runs:—

'You understand our unfortunate extremity, and I do not think you so devoid of Christianity but that you would throw so much into the Thames as we request now of you, rather than endanger so many innocent lives. You know there is £10 more at least *to be received of you for the play*. We desire you to lend us £5 of that, which shall be allowed to you, without which we cannot be bailed, *nor I play* any more till this be dispatched. It will lose you £20 ere the end of next week, besides *the hindrance of the next new play*. Pray, sir, consider our cases with humanity, and now give us cause to acknowledge you our true friend in time of need. . . . Your thankful and loving friends,

'NAT. FIELD.'

'The money shall be abated out of the money remains for *the play of Mr. Fletcher and ours*.

'ROB. DABORNE.'

'I have ever found you a true loving friend to me, and in so small a suit, it being honest, I hope you will not fail us.

'PHILIP MASSINGER.'

Though many of his plays are unfortunately lost to us, about a score have been preserved, of which among the most famous, are the tragedies of 'The Virgin Martyr' (written in conjunction with Dekker), 'The Duke of Milan,' and 'The Roman Actor'; and the comedies [*i.e.*, plays which have not a tragic ending] of 'The Great Duke of Florence,' 'The Maid of Honour,' and 'A New Way to Pay Old Debts.' Besides these he wrote 'The Bondman,' 'The Renegado,' 'The Picture,' 'The Fatal Dowry' (in conjunction with Field), 'The Unnatural Combat,' 'The Guardian,' 'A Very Woman,' 'The City Madam,' 'The Old Law' (with Middleton and Rowley), and several others. Let us examine one of these plays somewhat closely, taking the comedy which contains Sir Giles Overreach, the most successful of Massinger's creations. This is 'A New Way to Pay Old Debts.'

Sir Giles Overreach has taken advantage of the prodigality of his spendthrift nephew, Francis Wellborn, and, after supplying him with money for his extravagances, got mortgages over his estates, from which he in due time ejects his nephew, who falls into the direst need. Wellborn, however, is befriended by Lady Allworth, the widow of one

'FIELD (d. c. 1640) collaborated with Massinger in 'The Fatal Dowry' (and probably other plays), and is known as the author of 'Woman is a Weathercock' and 'Amends for Ladies.'

whom he had formerly laid under deep obligations. Overreach is deluded into thinking that the wealthy widow means to marry his victim, and as he counts in that event of despoiling him yet once more, he freely advances money to him. At the same time the grasping villain schemes to marry his fair daughter Margaret to Lord Lovell, who pretends to fall in with his views in order to advance the suit of his page, young Allworth, Margaret's lover. In the sequel the extortioner finds himself tricked out of his ill-gotten gains, his hopes of a great alliance for his daughter foiled, and his victim restored to prosperity. The sudden accumulation of these troubles drives him mad, and in the last act he is introduced raving impotently. 'I'll fall to execution !' he cries, flourishing his sheathed sword before his successful antagonists :—

' Ha ! I am feeble !
Some undone widow sits upon mine arm,
And takes away the uses of 't; and my sword,
Glued to my scabbard with wronged orphans' tears,
Will not be drawn. Ha ! what are these ? Sure, hangmen
That come to bind my hands, and then to drag me
Before the judgment seat ; now they are new shapes,
And do appear like Furies, with steel whips
To scourge my ulcerous soul. Shall I then fall
Ingloriously and yield ? No ; spite of Fate,
I will be forced to hell like to myself.
Though you were legions of accursed spirits,
Thus would I fly among you !'

He is consigned to custody as a lunatic, and Margaret and Allworth inherit his estates, restoring what is his own to Wellborn. The latter has now repented of his former follies; and obtains the help of Lovell (who marries Lady Allworth) to reinstate himself in the good opinion of the worthy. 'There is,' he says, 'something else,

' Besides the re-possession of my land,
And payment of my debts, that I must practise.
I had a reputation, but 'twas lost
In my loose course : and until I redeem it
Some noble way, I am but half made up.
It is a time of action ; if your worship
Will please to confer a company upon me
In your command, I doubt not in my service
To my king and country, but I shall do something
That may make me right again.'

Hallam, who speaks of Sir Giles Overreach as an 'original, masterly, inimitable conception,' declares that Massinger's most striking excellence lies in his conception of character: 'In this I must incline to place him above Fletcher, and, if I may venture to say it, even above Jonson; he is free from the hard outline of the one and the negligent looseness of the other.' Lamb, in commenting on the 'good sense, rational fondness, and chastened feeling' of a scene he quotes, states that 'Massinger had not the higher requisites of his art in anything like the degree in which they were possessed by Ford, Webster, and others. He never shakes or disturbs the mind with grief. He is read with composure and placid delight. He wrote with that equability of all the passions which made his English style the purest and most free from violent metaphors and harsh constructions of any of the dramatists who were his contemporaries.'

The special characteristic of Ford,¹ whom Lamb thus places above Massinger, and in the 'first order of poets,' John Ford, 1586—c. 1640 is his power over the imagination in dealing with things gloomy and terrible, and even monstrous. His genius as a writer of comedy is small; it is his tragedies only that have given him a great name in our literature. Of these 'The Broken Heart' is perhaps in all ways the finest. Calantha, the Princess of Sparta, whose death gives the play its name, is loved by Ithocles and loves him; but Orgilus determines to prevent their union, for Ithocles had forced his sister Penthea, who was betrothed to himself, into an unhappy marriage with Bassanes. Penthea, though she pardons her brother, and even pleads his cause with Calantha, sinks beneath the weight of her misery and dies bewailing her and her lover's hard fate. Orgilus then determines on and executes bloody vengeance upon Ithocles, for which he also perishes. Calantha, who has now in-

¹ Very little is known of his life. He was a Devonshire man of good family, came to London to study Law at the Middle Temple, wrote some verse and prose, and probably began his career as a dramatist about 1610; in 1640 he is believed to have returned to his birthplace, after which nothing is known of him. His chief plays besides 'The Broken Heart,' are 'The Lover's Melancholy,' 'Tis Pity She's a Whore,' 'Love's Sacrifice,' and 'Perkin Warbeck.' He had a share with Dekker and Rowley in 'The Witch of Edmonton,' and with the former in 'The Sun's Darling.'

of the best, while 'The Maid's Revenge,' 'Love's Cruelty,' and 'The Cardinal' have been highly praised. Most of his plays are, however, comedies; and of these 'The Ball,' 'The Lady of Pleasure,' and 'The Gamester' may be mentioned. He has considerable lyrical facility, which he exhibits to advantage in his masques and elsewhere. The following 'Dirge' from the 'Contention of Ajax and Ulysses' has probably helped more than all his other work to preserve his name to the 'general reader':

- 'The glories of our blood and state
Are shadows, not substantial things;
There is no armour against fate—
Death lays his icy hand on kings,
Sceptre and crown
Must tumble down,
And in the dust be equal made
With the poor crooked scythe and spade.
- 'Some men with swords may reap the field,
And plant fresh laurels where they kill;
But their strong nerves at last must yield—
They tame but one another still.
Early or late
They stoop to fate,
And must give up their murmuring breath
When they, poor captives, creep to death.
- 'The garlands wither on your brow—
Then boast no more your mighty deeds;
Upon Death's purple altar now
See where the victor-victim bleeds.
Your heads must come
To the cold tomb;
Only the actions of the just
Smell sweet and blossom in their dust.'

Shirley was a diligent student of his predecessors' works, and seems to have acquired a thorough mastery over the arts necessary to make a play pleasing to his audience. He had, however, says Hallam, 'no originality, no force in conceiving or delineating character, little of pathos, and less perhaps of wit. . . . But his mind was poetical; his better characters, especially females, express pure thoughts in pure language: he is never timid or affected, and seldom obscure; the incidents succeed rapidly, the personages are numerous, and there is a general animation in the scenes

which causes us to read him with some pleasure. No very good play, nor, possibly, any very good scene, could be found in Shirley; but he has many lines of considerable beauty.'

None of the other dramatic authors who remain to be mentioned is of any great importance. There is

Minor
Dramatic
Authors.

Richard Brome (d. 1652), who collaborated with Thomas Heywood in the 'Lancashire Witches,' and is the author of various comedies; while among still less important names are those of Jasper Mayne (d. 1672), Shakerley Marmion (d. 1639), H. Glapthorne, R. Davenport. Thomas Randolph, who died at the age of thirty (1635), has left us, besides a number of plays, some poems worthy of preservation. Here is part of the sturdy lines in which the fertile 'son' of Ben Jonson addresses his adopted father:—

'I was not born to Helicon, nor dare
Presume to think myself a Muse's heir.
I have no title to Parnassus Hill,
Nor any acre of it by the will
Of a dead ancestor, nor could I be
Ought but a tenant unto poverty.
But thy adoption quits me of all fear,
And makes me challenge a child's portion there.'

Yet another of the great Ben's children is William Cartwright (d. 1643), who produced several plays, as well as some poems. There are others, too, who each added something to the contemporary drama—such as Habington, Lovelace, Suckling, Denham—who are more interesting for their non-dramatic verse [see chap. xviii].¹

¹ William Davenant (who became poet-laureate and a knight after the Restoration) is chiefly notable for having managed to get his 'Siege of Rhodes' performed—as an 'opera'—in 1656, and having other plays of his composition acted semi-publicly while the theatres were yet officially closed. His chief non-dramatic work is a long romance in heroic quatrains: it is called "Gondibert." It was undertaken, he says, mainly with a 'desire for fame,' and is left half finished.

CHAPTER XVI.

THE POETS: FROM SPENSER TO DONNE.

At the time of the publication of 'The Shepherd's Kalendar' (1579), the greatest of all Elizabethan poems, Spenser's 'Fairy Queen,' was already in some measure planned, and some of it was actually written. In 1580, however, the poet went with Lord Grey de Wilton (as his private secretary) to Ireland, where he held various appointments, received grants of land, made the acquaintance of Raleigh, and wrote the first three books of 'The Fairy Queen,' before his visit (at the end of 1589) to England, whither he came to publish them. Returning to Ireland, he wrote 'Colin Clout's Come Home Again,' in 1591, in which year was published a collection of his minor poems, entitled 'Complaints,' and about the same time appeared 'Daphnida.' In 1594 he married, celebrating the event in an 'Epithalamion,' which Professor Hales calls 'the most perfect of all his poems, the most beautiful of all bridal songs.' To the wooing of the lady whom he then wedded we owe his 'Amoretti,' the greatest of the Elizabethan sonnet-series, if we put aside those of Shakespeare and Sidney. The second three books of 'The Fairy Queen' appeared in 1595, in which year the poet again visited London, doubtless with 'a desire to advance his fortunes; . . but he looked in vain for further preferment. He had fame and to spare, but this was to suffice.' In 1596 he published 'Four Hymns' and the 'Prothalamion,' the last of his poems. About 1597 he went back to his estate of Kilcolman, and in September 1598 was made sheriff of Cork. A month later, Irish insurgents attacked Kilcolman,

sacked Spenser's dwelling, and burnt it down. According to tradition, one of the poet's children perished. He himself escaped with his wife and the rest of his family to England, where, three months later, he died at a tavern in Westminster—'for lack of bread,' says Ben Jonson.

In a letter to Sir Walter Raleigh,¹ Spenser explained the import of his 'continued allegory or dark conceit,'
The Fairy Queen. . . . which I have entituled the Faery Queene.

He bids us note that 'the general end of all the book is to fashion a gentleman, or noble person, in virtuous or gentle discipline. . . . I chose,' he says, 'the history of King Arthur as most fit, for the excellency of his person, being made famous by many men's former works, and also furthest from the danger of envy and suspicion. . . . In which I have followed all the antique poets historical; first Homer, who, in the person of Agamemnon and Ulysses, hath ensampled a good governor and a virtuous man—the one in his "Ilias," the other in his "Odysseis"; then Virgil, whose like intention was to do in the person of Æneas. After him, Ariosto comprised them both in his Orlando; and, lately, Tasso discovered [i.e. revealed] them again, and formed parts in two persons namely, . . . *Ethicé*, or virtues of a private man, . . . in his "Rinaldo"; *Politicé* in his "Godfredo." *By ensample of which excellent Poets, I labour to pourtray in Arthur, before he was king, the image of a brave Knight, perfected in the twelve private moral virtues, as Aristotle hath devised: the which is the purpose of these first twelve books; which, if I find to be well accepted, I may be perhaps encouraged to frame the other part of political virtues in his person, after that he came to be king.*' Now, of the twelve books thus planned, to be followed, possibly, by another twelve, only six were written²; and therefore we are driven to discover the whole 'plot,' so to speak, from the sketch given in this letter. From this we learn that it was his intention to depict the Fairy Queen keeping her annual feast of twelve days, upon each of which one of King Arthur's knights should tell his adventures. Thus, the first

¹ For Raleigh's work in literature, see pp 334-336.

² Some fragments—three cantos—of another remain.

book tells the legend of the Red Cross Knight, who typifies Holiness in the allégory; the second, that of Sir Guyon, or Temperance, and so on.¹ Whilo each knight is to be the 'patron' of some one special virtue, 'in the person of Prince Arthur I set forth magnificence in particular; which virtue, for that (according to Aristotle and the rest) it is the perfection of all the rest, and containeth in it them all, therefore on the whole course I mention the deeds of Arthur appliable to that virtue which I writo of in that book.' Arthur had seen the queen of 'Faerye Land' in a vision, and went forth to seek her. *'In that Faery Queen, I mean glory in my general intention; but, in my particular, I conceive the most excellent and glorious person of our sovereign the Queen, and her kingdom in Faery Land. And yet, in some places else, I do otherwise shadow her. For, considering she beareth two persons, the one of a most royal Queen or Empress, the other of a most virtuous and beautiful lady, this latter part, in some place, I do express in Belphebe, fashioning her name according to your own excellent conceit of Cynthia (Phæbe and Cynthia being both names of Diana).'* The poem, then, was to be "an allegorical story—a story branching out into twelve separate stories, which themselves would branch out again and involve endless other stories. It is a complex scheme to keep well in hand, and Spenser's art in doing so has been praised by some of his critics. But the art, if there is any, is so subtle that it fails to save the reader any perplexity. The truth is that the power of ordering and connecting a long and complicated plan was not one of Spenser's gifts. In the first two books the allegorical story proceeds from point to point with fair coherence and consecutiveness.² Starting from the belief that true religion is the foundation of all goodness, it depicts the struggle, which every one then supposed to be going on, between absolute truth and righteousness on one side, and fatal error and bottomless wickedness on the other. Una, the truth—the single truth, in contrast to the counterfeit

¹ The third book has the legend of Britomart (Chastity); the fourth, Cambel and Triamond (Friendship); the fifth, Artegall (Justice); the sixth, Calidore (Courtesy). The fragments remaining are said to be cantos of 'Constancy.'

² Church's 'Spenser,' from which the substance of the remainder of this paragraph is quoted or condensed.

Duessa, false religion, and its embodiment in the false rival Mary Queen of Scots—with the claims, dangers, and champions of truth is the subject of the first book. The Red Cross Knight, St. George of England, overcomes the wiles of Duessa, the craft of the arch-sorcerer, the force and pride of the Apocalyptic Beast and Dragon, and wins the deliverance of Una and her love. The second book ("Temperance") treats of the internal struggle of a man with his passions, and shows us Sir Guyon conquering many foes of goodness, and destroying the most perilous of them all, Acrasia (*Licentiousness*), and her Bower of Bliss. After this, the thread of story and allegory, slender henceforth at best, is neglected and often lost. The third book ("Chastity") is a repetition of the ideas of the latter part of the second, with a heroine, Britomart, in place of the knight, with a special glorification of the high-flown sentiments about purity which were the poetic creed of the courtiers of Elizabeth. The loose nature of the plan becomes still more evident in the second instalment (Books IV.-VI.). Even the special note of each particular virtue becomes more faint and indistinct. The one law to which the poet feels bound is to have twelve cantos in each book; and to do this he is sometimes driven to "padding." Thus, one canto in the third book is a genealogy of British kings; one in the fourth has an elaborate catalogue of English and Irish rivers. His poem became an elastic framework, into which he could fit whatever interested him. He passes on to satire and caricature. We meet with Braggadochio and Trompart, the discomfiture of Malecasta, the conjugal troubles of Malbecco and Helenore, the imitation from Ariosto of the Squire of Dames. He becomes bolder in the distinct introduction of contemporary history. The defeat of Duessa was only figuratively shown in the first portion; in the second the subject is resumed. As Elizabeth is the "one form of many names"—Gloriana, Belphebe, Britomart, Mercilla—so, "under feigned colours shading a true case," he deals with her rival. Mary seems at one time the false Florimel, the creature of enchantment, stirring up strife, and fought for by the foolish knights whom she deceives: Blandamour and Paridell, the counterparts of Norfolk, and the intriguers of

1571. At another she is the fierce Amazon queen, Rade-gund, by whom even Artegal is temporarily subdued. And finally, the fate of the typical Duessa is that of the real Mary Queen of Scots, described in great detail, for which James of Scotland actually desired that Spenser should be tried and punished. So Philip II. is the Soldan, the Spanish monster Geryoneo, or the fosterer of Catholic intrigue in France and Ireland, Grantorto. Prince Arthur is at one time Leicester, at another Sidney. Real names are introduced with scarcely any disguise: Guizor and Barbon, the knight who threw away his shield, Henry IV., and his Lady Flourdellis, the Lady Belge and her seventeen sons (the Flemish provinces), the Lady Irena (Ireland), whom Artegal (Lord Grey) delivers. The overthrow of the Armada, the English war in the Low Countries, the apostasy of Henry IV., the deliverance of Ireland from the "great wrong" of Desmond's rebellion, the giant Grantorto, form, under more or less transparent allegory, great part of the "Legend of Justice." The whole is really a collection of separate tales and allegories, as much as the "Arabian Nights" or the "Idylls of the King." As a whole, it is confusing; but we need not treat it as a whole."¹

The stanza which the poet uses—and which now bears his name—is one of his own invention: to the *ottava rima* of the Italians—used by Ariosto in his 'Orlando,' and by Chaucer (who probably got it from France) in his 'Monk's Tale'—Spenser added a ninth line, rhyming with the eighth, but longer than it by one foot,² making a most musical form of verse, well adapted to his power both of calling up visions and combining harmonious sounds. His language, too, is of his own invention, the diction being as distinctly 'Spenserian' as his stanza is.³ Such liberties does he take that he thinks nothing of altering the form of a word to make it fit into his metre, or to adapt it to a rhyme; nor

¹ From Church: see the note on p. 205.

² The rhyme formula, as will be seen from the specimens given below, is *ababbcbcc*, the final line being an Alexandrine (six iambs) and the others decasyllabic.

³ See p. 169.

does he hesitate at making one part of speech serve for another, or at inventing a word he needs, even when there is one which he could use.¹ However, it must be remembered that at that time the English language was not as fixed as it is now, and that every writer was more or less helping to fashion the vocabulary. The following specimens from 'The Fairy Queen' (the description of the Paradise in Bk. III., Canto 6) can do little more than show the reader an example or two of Spenser's manner of versification, and his diction—his orthography, as being in a measure peculiar to himself, is here preserved—and give him some idea of the beauty of his descriptions:—

' It sited was in fruitful soyle of old,
 And girt in with two walls on either side ;
 The one of yron, the other of bright gold,
 That none might thorough breake, nor overstride.
 And double gates it had which opened wide,
 By which both in and out men moten pas :
 Th' one faire and fresh, the other old and dride.
 Old Genius the porter of them was,
 Old Genius, the which a double nature has.

' He letteth in, he letteth out to wend,
 All that to come into the world desire :
 A thousand thousand naked babes attend
 About him day and night, which doe require
 That he with fleshly weedes should them attire :
 Such as him list, such as eternall fate
 Ordained hath, he clothes with sinful mire,
 And sendeth forth to live in mortall stato,
 Till they agayn returne backe by the hinder gate.

' After that they againe retourned beene,
 They in that Gardin planted bee agayne,
 And grow afresh, as they had never sene
 Fleshly corruption, nor mortall payne.
 Some thousand years so doen they there remayne,
 And then of him are clad with other hew,
 Or sent into the chaungefull world agayne,
 Till thither they retourne where first they grew :
 So, like a wheele, around they ronne from old to new.

¹ 'Sometimes he merely alters a letter or two, sometimes he twists off the head or the tail of the unfortunate vocable altogether. But this fearless, lordly, truly royal style makes one only feel the more how easily, if he chose, he could avoid the necessity of having recourse to such outrages.'—CRAIK.

'Ne needs there Gardiner to sett or sow,
 To plant or prune; for of their owne accord
 All things, as they created were, doe grow,
 And yet remember well the mighty word,
 Which first was spoken by th' Almighty Lord,
 That bad them to increase and multiply:
 Ne doe they need with water of the ford,
 Or of the clouds, to moysten their roots dry;
 For in themselves eternall moisture they imply.

* * * * *

'Great enemy to it, and to all the rest
 That in the Gardin of Adonis springs,
 Is wicked Tyme; who with his scyth addrest
 Does mow the flowring herbs and goodly things,
 And all their glory to the ground downe flings,
 Where they do wither, and are fowly mard:
 He flies about, and with his flaggy winges
 Beats down both leaves and buds without regard,
 Ne ever pittty may relent his malice hard.

'Yet pittty often did the gods relent,
 To see so faire thinges mard and spoiled quight;
 And their great mother Venus did lament
 The losse of her deare brood, her deare delight:
 Her hart was pierst with pittty at the sight,
 When walking through the Gardin them she saw,
 Yet no'te she find redresse for such despight:
 For all that lives is subject to that law;
 All things decay in time, and to their end doe draw.

But were it not that Time their troubler is,
 All that in this delightfull Gardin growes
 Should happy bee, and have immortall blis:
 For here all plenty and all pleasure flowes;
 And sweete love gentle fitts emongst them throwes,
 Without fell rancor or fond gealosity.
 Frankly each paramor his leman knowes,
 Each bird his mate: ne any does enoy
 Their goodly merriment and gay felicity.

'There is continuall Spring, and harvest there
 Continuall, both meeting at one tyme;
 For both the boughes doe laughing blossoms beare,
 And with fresh colours decke the wanton Pryme,
 And eke attonce the heavy trees they clyme,
 Which seem to labour under their fruites lode:
 The whiles the joyous birdes make their pastyme
 Emongst the shady leaves, their sweet abode,
 And their trew loves without suspition tell abroad.'

Spenser's minor poems—'minor' by comparison with 'The Fairy Queen,' but sufficient of themselves to have placed him in the forefront of the Elizabethan singers—must be but briefly treated of here.

Spenser's
Minor
Poems.

Among his earliest work are some boyish experiments, afterwards worked up into the short sonnet-series known as the 'Visions of Bellay' and 'The Visions of Petrarch,' and one or two other inconsiderable writings. Of the 'nine comedies' which we hear of, no trace has ever been seen; yet it is interesting to consider that he—like nearly all the great intellects of his day—was at one time drawn to the drama. His volume of 'Complaints' (published 1591) contains a poem entitled 'The Ruins of Time,' in which he dwells on the glories of Sidney's family: the poem is dedicated to the Countess of Pembroke, Sidney's sister—concluding with an *envoy* to the—

'Immortal spirit of Philisides,
Which now art made the Heaven's ornament.'

He had previously lamented the same dear friend and patron in an 'Elegie upon the Death of Astrophel' and in a 'Pastoral Aeglogue.' In 'The Tears of the Muses' ('Complaints'), each of the 'sacred sisters nine' bewails the doleful state of the art over which she presides. The poet seems to have little idea of the magnificent epoch which was then just opening, and of which he was to be a chief ornament. The modern reader notices with especial interest that, at the time when Shakespeare is beginning his career, Melpomene and Thalia weep that no fit writers of Tragedy and Comedy are now living. But a still more interesting piece in this volume of 'Complaints' is 'Prosopopoia; or, Mother Hubbard's Tale,' in which he gives a bitterly satirical picture of the pettinesses of Court life, in a poem which, thinks Church, 'may take rank with the satirical writings of Chaucer and Dryden, for keenness of touch, for breadth of treatment, for swing and fiery scorn, and sustained strength of sarcasm.' Thus he alludes in this tale of 'The Ape and the Fox' to the sad plight of a supplicant for Court rewards—a plight, no doubt, which he had but recently had full experience of:—

'So pitifull a thing is suters state !
 Most miserable man, whom wicked fate
 Hath brought to Court, to sue for had-y-wist,
 That few have found, and manie one hath mist !
 Full little knowest thou, that hast not tride,
 What hell it is in suing long to hide :
 To loose good dayes, that might be better spent ;
 To wast long nights in pensive discontent ;
 To speed to-day, to be put back to-morrow ;
 To feed on hope, to pine with feare and sorrow ;
 To have thy Princes grace, yet want her Peeres ;
 To have thy asking, yet waite manie yeeres ;
 To fret thy soule with crosses and with cares ;
 To cate thy heart through comfortlesse dispaire ;
 To sawne, to crowche, to waite, to ride, to runne,
 To spend, to give, to want, to be undone.'

Sidney, the scholar, courtier, statesman, the gallant
 soldier whose muse 'tempers her words to trampling
 horses' feet,' the hero in whose life and death
 every lofty ideal seemed to be realised, has left
 his monument in the poetry he wrote, as well as in the
 sweet sad strains sung over him after 'God had disdained
 the world of that most noble spirit,' as his friend Spenser
 has it. He was the son of Sir Henry Sidney, one of
 Elizabeth's favourite statesmen. Educated at Shrewsbury
 and Oxford, he travelled over a large part of Europe
 between 1572 and 1575, being sheltered in the English
 ambassador's house at Paris on the massacre of St.
 Bartholomew. Returning to England, his brilliant per-
 sonality at once impressed the Queen and her court, as
 it had the foreign statesmen in his travels abroad, and
 he was sent at the age of two-and-twenty on a mission
 to the Emperor of Germany. His masque, 'The Lady
 of May,' was written in 1578, to entertain the Queen
 on her visit to his uncle Leicester. About this time, he
 was first acquainted with Spenser and with Harvey, and
 was with them interested in the 'reform' in versifying
 which the latter was so especially anxious to introduce.
 There are experiments in it in Sidney's prose romance,
 the 'Arcadia,' begun at Penshurst (Sidney's birthplace),
 in Kent, about 1580: to about the same period—all his
 work was published posthumously—are assigned his two

Sir Philip
 Sidney,
 1554-1586.

chief works, the 'Apology for Poetry' and his 'Astrophel and Stella' sonnets. In 1581 he was knighted; and two years later married a daughter of Sir Francis Walsingham. He was made Governor of Flushing in 1584, and died of a wound received at Zutphen in 1586.

The 'Arcadia' is a romance in which we are told the adventures of two young Greek princes, Musidorus and Pyrocles. The book owed something, says Hallam, 'to the heroic and pastoral romances of Spain.' The descriptions of pastoral scenes and heroic deeds are the best things in it, while of power of drawing character there is little trace. His style in this book is not at its best: it is over-loaded with fanciful images and antitheses, with plentiful traces of the same influences that moulded Lyly's style.

In the 'Apology for Poetry,' he is seen to much better advantage as a stylist, and the work itself is of considerably more interest to the modern reader, on account of its subject-matter. Sidney seems to have been moved to write this 'Apology' or 'Defence' of the poet's function by the fact that one Philip Gosson had dedicated to him an attack on the stage,—'The School of Abuse.' The word 'poet,' as used by Sidney, does not merely or necessarily mean the man who writes verse:—

'The Greeks named him ποιητήρ, which name hath, as the most excellent, gone through other languages: it cometh of the word ποιεῖν, which is "to make": wherein I know not whether by luck or wisdom we Englishmen have met with the Greeks in calling him a "maker"; which name, how high and incomparable a title it is, I had rather were known by marking the scope of other sciences than by any partial allegation. . . . Indeed, the greatest part of poets have apparelled their poetical inventions in that numerous [*i.e.*, metrical] kind of writing which is called verse. Indeed, but apparelled verse, being but an ornament and no cause to poetry, since there have been many most excellent poets that have never versified, and now swarm many versifiers that need never answer to the name of poets. . . . It is not rhyming and versing that maketh a poet, no more than a long gown maketh an advocate, who though he pleaded in armour, should be an advocate and no soldier; but it is that feigning notable images of virtues, vices, or what else, with that delightful teaching, which must be the right describing note to know a poet by. Although, indeed, the senate of poets have chosen verse as their fittest raiment, meaning, as in matter they passed all

in all, so in manner to go beyond them; not speaking table-talk fashion or, like men in a dream, words as they chanceably fall from the mouth, but piecing each syllable of each word by just proportion, according to the dignity of the subject.'

Throughout this essay, he writes in clear straightforward English, with none of those affectations which he condemns (and uses somewhat himself in the 'Arcadia'),¹ and with great vigour, rising here and there into real eloquence, with considerable humour and fine critical judgment.

It is the first real critical essay in our language, and the only important one of any length, until we come to Dryden.² Sidney's careful judgment of the state of contemporary literature is peculiarly interesting. Writing at the opening of the great age of our literature, he marvels that now, though 'an oversaint quietness should seem to strow the house for poets, they are almost in as good a reputation as the mountebanks at Venice.' After Chaucer, Sackville, and Surrey, he can think of no English printed poems, save the 'Shepherd's Kalendar,' 'that have poetical sinews in them.' In our tragedies and comedies, he notes 'the mingling of kings and clowns' in 'mongrel tragi-comedies,' and the outrages committed on probability by the total neglect of the unities. Even 'Gorboduc,' he points out,

'is faulty both in place and time, the two necessary companions of all corporal actions. For where the stage should always represent but one place, and the uttermost time presupposed in it should be, both by Aristotle's precept and common reason, but one day, there is both many days and many places inartificially imagined.

'But, if it be so in "Gorboduc," how much more in all the rest, where you shall have Asia of the one side, and Afric of the other, and so many other kingdoms that the players when he comes in must ever begin with telling where he is, or else the tale will not be conceived!

¹ 'Now for the outside of it [contemporary poetry], which is words, or diction, it is even well worse: so is that honey-slowing matron eloquence apparelled, or rather disguised in a courtesan-like painted affectation. One time with so far-fetched words, that many seem monsters, but most seem strangers to any poor Englishmen; another time with coursing of a letter, as if they were bound to follow the method of a dictionary; another time with figures and flowers extremely winter-starved. But I would this fault were only peculiar to versifiers, and had not as large possession among prose-printers; and which is to be marvelled, among many scholars, and which is to be pitied, among many preachers. . . . For similitudes in certain printed discourses, I think all herbalists, all stories of beasts, fowls, and fishes, are rifled up, that they may come in multitudes to wait upon any of our conceits, which certainly is as absurd a surfeit to the ears as is possible.'

² Essay of Dramatic Poesy, 1667.

Now shall you have three ladies walk to gather flowers, and then we must believe the stage to be a garden. By-and-by, we hear news of shipwreck in the same place, then we are to blame if we accept it not for a rock. Upon the back of that comes out a hideous monster with fire and smoke, and then the miserable beholders are bound to take it for a cave; while, in the meantime, two armies fly in, represented with four swords and bucklers, and, then, what hard heart will not receive it for a pitched field?

'Now of time they are much more liberal, for ordinary it is that two young princes fall in love; after many traverses, she is got with child, delivered of a fair boy; he is lost, groweth a man, falleth in love, and is ready to get another child,—and all this in two hours' space, which, how absurd it is in sense, even sense may imagine and art hath taught and all ancient examples justified, and at this day the ordinary players in Italy will not err in.'

Sidney did better, however, than merely point out the faults of the poetry of his time: he taught by example as well as by precept. His greatest work is the series of sonnets known as '*Astrophel and Stella*,' in which the young poet tells his love ('*Stella*' is Penelope Devereux, the wife of Lord Rich) and his disappointment. 'As a series of sonnets,' says a gifted critic, 'the *Astrophel and Stella* poems are second only to Shakespeare's; as a series of love-poems, they are perhaps unsurpassed. Other writers are sweeter, more sonorous: no other love poet of the time is so real. The poems to *Stella* are steeped throughout in a certain keen and pungent individuality, which leaves a haunting impression behind it. They represent not a mere isolated mood, whether half-real, like Daniel's passion for "*Delia*," or wholly artificial, like Thomas Watson's passions, but a whole passage in a genuine life. Here is no question of the pastoral landscape, with its conventional pair of figures. Sidney's everyday life as a courtier and politician, mingling with the pageantries and touching the great interests of his time, his personal character, with its serious and Puritan bias, his hopes and fears for his own prospects and career,—these are the facts of solid and human reality which deepen and vary the music of his passion for *Stella*, like rocks in the current of a stream.' Let us hear him tell how he became a poet:—

'I never drank of Aganippe well,
Nor ever did in shade of *Tempo* sit

And Muses scorn with vulgar brains to dwell;
 Poor layman I, for sacred rites unfit.
 Some do I hear of poets' fury tell,
 But, God wot, wot not what they mean by it;
 And this I swear by blackest brook of hell,
 I am no pick-purse of another's wit.

'How falls it, then, that with so smooth an ease
 My thoughts I speak, and what I speak doth flow
 In verse, and that my verse best wits doth please?
 Guess we the cause? What is it *thus*? Fie, no!
 Or so? Much less. How then? Sure thus it is,
 My lips are sweet inspired with Stella's kiss.'

And again on the same theme:—

'Stella, think not that I by verse seek fame,
 Who seek, who hope, who love, who live but thee;
 Thine eyes my pride, thy lip mine history:
 If thou praise not, all other praise is shame.
 Nor so ambitious am I as to frame
 A nest for my young praise in laurel tree:
 In truth I swear I wish not there should be
 Graved in my epitaph a Poet's name.

'Nor, if I would, could I just title make,
 That any land thereof to me should grow,
 Without my plumes from others' wings I take:
 For nothing from my wit or will doth flow,
 Since all my words thy beauty doth indite,
 And love doth hold my hand, and makes me write.'

Sidney had wound up his 'Apology' with a humorous curse on those who could not 'hear the planet-like music of poetry.' He prays that they may 'live in love, and never get favour for lacking skill of a sonnet'; and that, on their deaths, their memory may 'die from the earth for want of an epitaph.' His own memory, were there nothing else to preserve it, could never suffer that fate. Numberless poets, small and great, bewailed the loss of Astrophel. Among these was Fulke Greville, Lord Brooke, who had been his schoolmate at Shrewsbury, and perhaps wrote the elegy, full of beautiful and touching thoughts, but somewhat cramped in the utterance, beginning 'Silence augmenteth grief.' We take from it this stanza:—

Lord Brooke
 (1554-1628).

'He, only like himself, was second unto none.
 Where death—though life—we rue and wrong, and all in vain do
 moan,
 Their loss, not him, wail they that fill the world with cries;
 Death slew not him, but he made death his ladder to the skies!'

Another whom we may mention here, as among the number of Sidney's mourners, friends, and companions, is Edward Dyer, one of the band of gentlemanly scholars interested in the new rules of versifying. Only a small number of specimens of his own poems—of which the best known is that beginning 'My mind to me a kingdom is'—are extant. Of more importance, perhaps, is Henry Constable, who has a sonnet to Sidney's soul. 'He was' (says Mr. Saintsbury) 'a close friend of Sidney, many of whose sonnets were published with his; and his work has much of the Sidneian colour, but with fewer flights of happily expressed fancy.' Like Sidney, his chief work is a series of sonnets, 'Diana' (published 1592-4).

A most remarkable specimen of these sonnet-series—and the first of them to be published—is the 'Hecatompethia; or, Passionate Century of Love,' by Thomas Watson, which appeared in 1582. The 'sonnets' or 'passions' in this set are each composed of eighteen lines, divided into three equal stanzas. They commemorate no real love emotions, but are carefully versified expositions of 'supposed' feelings. To each is prefixed a sort of brief argument or explanation in prose, and in some of these the poet indicates the sources of his inspiration.

There were many of our poets in those days—Spenser was one of them—who were celebrating the glories of Albion's England. England in verse, as the chroniclers were in prose, and the dramatists on the stage.¹ Among these is William Warner, whose 'Albion's England' is a chronicle, written in the popular rhyming seven-footed couplets.

A more inspired poet is Daniel, author of the 'History

¹ We omit from this chapter poets such as Marlowe, Peele, Jonson, and many others whose works are discussed in connection with the Drama.

of the Civil Wars between the Two Houses of Lancaster and York,' which was written in eight-line stanzas, and began to be published in 1595. The 'Complaint of Rosamond' (1590) is another poem of his which is founded on history. But better than anything of this kind that he did are his sonnets to 'Delia,' some of which are among the most beautiful of Elizabethan sonnets.

Drayton, too, like Daniel and many others in this time, turned to English history for his inspiration, one of his chief works being his 'Mortimeriados,' or, as it was afterwards called, 'The Barons' Wars' (1596-1603). This, like Daniel's 'Civil Wars,' was written in eight-line stanzas, of which the following will serve as a specimen, while it brings to mind the words spoken of Brutus by Antony, in Shakespeare's 'Julius Cæsar':—

'He was a man—then boldly dare to say—
 In whose rich soul the virtues well did suit,
 In whom so mixed the elements all lay,
 That none to one could sov'reignty impute,
 As all did govern, yet all did obey:
 He of a temper was so absolute,
 As that it seemed, when Nature him began,
 She meant to show all that might be in man.'

A longer, if not a greater, work is his 'Polyolbion,' an historical and geographical description of England, written in rhyming Alexandrines. To him, too, belongs that spirited battle-song of 'Agincourt,' closing with

'Upon Saint Crispin's day
 Fought was this noble fray,
 Which fame did not delay
 To England to carry;
 Oh, when shall English men,
 With such acts fill a pen,
 Or England breed again
 Such a King Harry?'

Like nearly all his contemporaries, he wrote lyrical poetry; his sonnet-series, 'Idea' (1594), contains, among others, this wonderful poem:—

'Since there's no help, come let us kiss and part,—
 Nay, I have done, you get no more of me;
 And I am glad, yea glad with all my heart,
 That thus so cleanly I myself can free.

' Shake hands for ever, cancel all our vows,
And when we meet at any time again,
Be it not seen in either of our brows
That we one jot of former love retain.

' Now at the last gasp of love's latest breath,
When his pulse failing, passion speechless lies,
When faith is kneeling by his bed of death,
And innocence is closing up his eyes,
Now, if thou would'st, when all have given him over,
From death to life thou might'st him yet recover.'

A host of lesser poets, who would have sufficed to render almost any other age of our literature remarkable, must be passed over with scant notice here. Minor
Lyrics.
Elizabethan
Miscellanies. Lyrics by many of these are to be found in the numerous miscellanies, song-books, etc., of the age. In the 'Passionate Pilgrim' (1599)—along with lyrics of Shakespeare, Marlowe, and Raleigh—is the best poem of Richard Barnfield. 'England's Helicon' (1600) has specimens of Nicholas Breton's lyrics; and others of his poems are to be found in a miscellany entitled 'Breton's Bower of Delights.' Davison's 'Poetical Rhapsody' (1602) contains some of the songs of Thomas Campion. A remarkable lyric, much admired by Ben Jonson, is the 'Burning Babe' of Robert Southwell, a Jesuit priest, executed, at the age of little over thirty, in 1594. Robert
Southwell
(1562-1594). His poetry is always religious, the longest of his works being 'St. Peter's Complaints.' From a short poem of his, 'Times goes by Turns,' we take this stanza:—

' Not always fall of leaf, nor ever spring,
No endless night, yet not eternal day;
The saddest birds a season find to sing,
The roughest storm a calm may soon allay;
Thus with succeeding turns God tempereth all,
That man may hope to rise yet fear to fall.'

Two minor writers of religious poetry may be mentioned after Southwell. These are Giles and Phineas Giles
Fletcher
(c1585-1623)
Phineas
Fletcher
(c1585-1650). Fletcher, cousins of the dramatist, and sons of Dr. Giles Fletcher, the author of a series of love poems, entitled 'Licia.' Phineas wrote an allegorical poem, entitled 'The Purple Island,' under which name he discoursed in seven-lined stanzas of the

body and soul of man. His brother Giles is the author of 'Christ's Victory and Triumph,' which is written in a curious eight-line stanza of his own devising. Both poets are followers and imitators of Spenser.

Spenser's influence is apparent, but less strongly, in the work of William Browne, whose 'Shepherd's Pipe' appeared in 1614. The first book of his, 'Britannia's Pastorals,' was published in 1614, and was followed two years later by another instalment, the third book being published long after the poet's death. In this work he handles the 'heroic couplet' with graceful ease, and is particularly happy in his descriptions of Nature and his portrayals of country life.

With Browne the name of his friend Wither is closely associated, not only for the share the latter had in 'The Shepherd's Pipe,' mentioned above, but also because of the influence of Browne on him. Wither's first valuable production was 'The Shepherd's Hunting,' written in 1615, while undergoing a term of imprisonment for a volume of satires, entitled 'Abuses Stript and Whipt.' In 'The Shepherd's Hunting,' he uses a seven-syllabled line, which he often handles with great felicity:—

'If thy verse do bravely tower,
As she makes wing she gets power;
Yet the higher she doth soar,
She's affronted still the more,
Till she to the high'st hath passed;
Then she rests with fame at last.
Let nought, therefore, thee affright,
But make forward in thy flight.'

In 'Fidelia,' which also appeared in 1615, is the famous and beautiful song beginning, 'Shall I wasting in despair.' Wither's other chief works are 'The Mistress of Philarete' (1622), 'Hymns and Songs of the Church' (1623), and 'Hallelujah,' which appeared in 1641. As a man of strong Puritan convictions (like his friend Browne), he took a prominent part in the political warfare of the later part of his life; and in much of his voluminous prose, and many of his songs, he advocates strenuously the cause he loved.

We turn to metrical composition of a very different kind in the work of three men who wrote satires—
Joseph Hall Hall, Marston, and Donne. Hall (who died at
(1574-1656). the age of eighty-two, after being ejected by the Commonwealth from the Bishopric of Norwich) has left a considerable quantity of prose, including a Latin allegorical satire, entitled 'Mundus Alter et Idem.' It is, however, in his character as author of the six books 'Virgedemiarum' (i.e. of 'Rod Harvests') that we are mainly interested in him. This is a series of satires, of which the first three books—'Toothless Satires'—were published in 1597, and the other three—'Biting Satires'—in 1598. His model is generally Juvenal, and he claims to be the first of English satirists, his claim being fiercely disputed by Marston. But both had been preceded in formal satire by Gascoigne (who used blank verse), and possibly by Donne. Hall wields the heroic couplet with vigour and ease: his command of invective is considerable; and he has much skill in depicting the vices he chastises. His language, however, is frequently extremely coarse, and the flow of his intemperateness is apt to be wearisome. Marston, who
John Marston is mainly interesting in connection with his feud
(1575-1634) with Ben Jonson, is Hall's equal in scurrility and coarseness, but has no claim to rank with him in power and skill. His chief formal satires are entitled 'Certain Satires' and 'The Scourge of Villainy,' published about 1598.

Donne's satires, much as they were admired by later poets (including Pope, who recast them), are not
John Donne now considered to be his most remarkable works.
(1573-1631). He is looked upon as the founder of the so-called 'Metaphysical' school of verse-writers, a school whose members were distinguished by a turn for 'nice speculations of philosophy' and for 'elaborate conceits,' strained similes, and fantastic images. 'The taste which this school represents,' says Professor Hales, 'marks other literatures besides our own at this time. It was "in the air" of that age, and so was not originated by Donne. But it was he who in England first gave it full expression, who was its first vigorous and effective spokesman. And this secures him a

conspicuous position in the history of our literature, when we remember how prevalent was the fashion of "conceits" during the first half of the seventeenth century.' Several of Donne's lyrics, however, in spite of the language they are couched in, exhibit vivid fancy and a real gift of song. His poems were not collected till after his death. Many of his sermons (Donne had entered the Church in 1610, and died as Dean of St. Paul's) have also been preserved, and have received high praise.

The following stanzas from 'A Valediction forbidding Mourning' are fairly representative of Donne's manner:—

'Our two souls therefore, which are one,
Though I must go, endure not yet
A breach, but an expansion,
Like gold to airy thinness beat. -

If they be two, they are two so
As stiff twin compasses are two,
Thy soul, the fix'd foot, makes no show
To move, but doth, if th' other do.

And though it in the centre sit,
Yet when the other far doth roam,
It leans and hearkens after it,
And grows erect as that comes home.

Such wilt thou be to me, who must
Like th' other foot obliquely run,
Thy firmness makes my circle just,
And makes me end where I begun.'

CHAPTER XVII.

THE POETS: FROM DONNE TO COWLEY (CAROLINE AND COMMONWEALTH LYRISTS).

IF we except Milton, who stands apart from his age, as we have seen, and who is treated in this book in a separate chapter, the chief poets of the time are lyrists. The works of most of them are tinged, often imbued, we have said, with the conceits and the fantasticism and other peculiarities, often elegant in the poems of Ben Jonson, generally carried to excess in the writings of Donne, to which has been given the name of 'Marinism'¹; but though these characteristics are common to nearly all the writers we are now about to treat of, they have other and more valuable individual qualities, which have earned for them high rank among English song-writers. Let us begin with two names typical of the gallant Cavalier lyrists (all of the poets in this chapter are anti-Puritan or Royalist in sympathies²), the singers of court and society verse,—Suckling and Lovelace.

Sir John Suckling. 1609—1642. — Richard Lovelace, 1618—1658.	was a devoted adherent of the King, and, having incurred the anger of the Long Parliament, fled to France, where, after much affliction, he ended his own life. His verses were written as a relaxation in the courtly, scholarly fashion of his day, and were for the most part not printed in his lifetime; he also produced some worthless plays. 'He is acknowledged,' says Hallam, 'to have left far behind him all former writers of songs in <i>gaiety</i> and <i>ease</i> ; it is not equally clear that he has ever been surpassed,' though for a couple
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¹ See Addison's remarks on Cowley, pp. 298-9.

² Except Marvell: see p. 807.

of generations a large amount of song-writing testifies to his influence, and to the fact that he was regarded as a model for amorous courtier-poets to imitate. The actual quantity of his verses that has been preserved is very small,—it occupies some twenty pages in Ohalmers,—and of this a considerable proportion is trivial. His fame chiefly rests on his graceful and flowing ‘Ballad upon a Wedding’ and a few charming songs, of which perhaps the most graceful is the well-known ‘Why so pale and wan, fond lover?’ From the ‘Ballad’ we quote these lines:—

‘Her feet beneath her petticoat
Like little mice stole in and out,
As if they feared the light:
But oh! she dances such a way,
No sun upon an Easter day
Is half so fine a sight!
* * * * *
O’ th’ sudden up they rise and dance;
Then sit again and sigh and glance;
Then dance again and kiss:
Thus several ways the time did pass,
Till every woman wished her place,
And every man wished his.’

Lovelace has left us even less worth preserving than has Suckling; yet there are the verses ‘On going to the Wars,’ quoted below, and two at least of the four stanzas ‘To Althea, from Prison,’ to preserve his fame as the writer of two exquisite lyrics. Thus he writes to his Lucasta:—

‘Tell me not, sweet, I am unkind,
That from the nunnery
Of thy chaste breast and quiet mind
To war and arms I fly.
True, a new mistress now I chase,
The first foe in the field,
And with a stronger faith embrace
A sword, a horse, a shield.
Yet this inconstancy is such
As you too shall adore,—
I could not love thee, dear, so much
Loved I not honour more.’

Lovelace, like Suckling, suffered for his loyalty to the King, and died miserably in London before the King’s cause triumphed again.

Carew, who held a post at Charles I.'s Court, is called by
 Thomas Hallam 'the most celebrated among the lighter-
 Carew, poets'; though this is perhaps scarcely accurate, it
 1589-1639. is certain that he has left us some of the daintiest
 and most finely executed songs of the time, which combine
 the grace and freedom of his contemporaries and immediate
 predecessors with something of that strictness and careful
 polish which is too often the most notable thing in the
 verses of the next generation. His longest work is a
 masque entitled 'Cœlum Britannicum'; it is in his songs,
 of course, however, that we find his title to the grateful
 remembrances of posterity. Here are two (of the three)
 stanzas from 'Disdain Returned':—

'He that loves a rosy cheek,
 Or a coral lip admires,
 Or from star-like eyes doth seek
 Fuel to maintain his fires,
 As old Time makes these decay,
 So his flames must waste away.

But a smooth and steadfast mind,
 Gentle thoughts and calm desires,
 Hearts, with equal love combined,
 Kindle never-dying fires;
 Where these are not, I despise
 Lovely cheeks, or lips, or eyes.'

But of all this school the most famous and the most
 important, when we take into consideration both
 Robert Herrick, the quantity and quality of his work, is Herrick,
 1591-1634: who published two volumes of poems, mostly
 written considerably before the date of their appearance—
 'Hesperides' in 1648, and 'Noble Numbers' about the same
 time. There is little to be said concerning his life; he was
 educated at Cambridge (and perhaps previously at West-
 minster School), was appointed to a living in Devonshire,
 ejected from his cure under the Commonwealth, and re-
 stored to it on the Restoration. The 'Hesperides'—the title
 'Children of the West' is due to the fact that the book came
 from the Devonshire solitudes—is a miscellaneous collection
 of short poems, of which the author writes thus:—

'I sing of brooks, of blossoms, birds, and bowers,
 Of April, May, of June and July flowers:

I sing of Maypoles, hock-carts, wassails, wakes,
 Of bridegrooms, brides, and of their bridal cakes.
 I write of Youth, of Love;—and have access
 By these to sing of cleanly wantonness;
 I sing of dew, of rains, and, piece by piece,
 Of balm, of oil, of spice, and ambergris.
 I sing of times trans-shifting; and I write
 How roses first came red and lilies white.
 I write of groves, of twilight, and I sing
 The Court of Mab and of the Fairy King.
 I write of Hell; I sing and ever shall
 Of Heaven—and hope to have it after all.'

From this description we are led to expect many verses on the quaint and pretty country customs; and such there are, but it is in those 'of Love . . . and cleanly wantonness' in which he is generally at his best.¹ He delights in purely physical beauty, and portrays it with the love of a worshipper and the skill of an artist; one scarcely thinks of him without calling to mind the Julia, Anthea, and Perilla whom he has so warmly painted. Pretty examples of light verse of this kind are 'Cherry ripe,' 'Some asked me where the rubies grow,' and the pieces on 'Julia's Clothes'; yet there is in several of his best lyrics a strain of gentle melancholy, a recollection of the transience and decay of earthly delights, which almost approaches to something of sentimentality.' We find it especially in the best known of his songs, such as 'Gather ye rosebuds while ye may,' 'Fair daffodils, we weep to see you waste away so soon,' and in such lines as these 'To Anthea':—

'Now is the time when all the lights wax dim,
 And thou, Anthea, must withdraw from him
 Who was thy servant. Dearest, bury me
 Under that holy-oak or gospel-tree,
 Where, though thou seest not, thou mayst think upon
 Me, when thou yearly go'st in procession.
 Or, for mine honour, lay me in that tomb
 In which thy sacred relics shall have room;
 For my embalming, sweetest, there shall be
 No spices wanting, when I'm laid by thee.'

¹ 'Hesperides' also contains a number of trivial pieces ('epigrams,' etc.) of singularly uncleanly wantonness; these are fortunately—which is by no means always the case with these lyrics—as destitute of poetical merit as they are of any vestiges of decency, and may therefore be entirely neglected.

We will make one more extract from this collection, one of the sets of fine verses to Ben Jonson, to whom he was in lyrism more truly a spiritual 'son' than any who bore that title, and greater than his father:—

'When I a verse shall make,
Know I have prayed thee,
For old religion's sake,
Saint Ben, to aid me.
Make the way smooth for me,
When I, thy Herrick,
Honouring thee, on my knee
Offer my lyric.
Candles I'll give to thee,
And a new altar;
And thou, Saint Ben, shalt be
Writ in my psalter.'

If in 'Hesperides' Herrick is often frankly voluptuous, he may be said to have atoned for it in the eyes of some readers by the 'Noble Numbers,' in which collection 'he sings the Birth of his Christ, and sighs for his Saviour's suffering on the Cross,' as his title-page of 1647 has it. The sincerity of his belief and aspirations has been questioned (a thing due surely to the prejudice against the writer excited by the recollection of certain parts of 'Hesperides'); but as to the beauty, strength, and dignity of much of the poetry there can be no doubt. We quote the lines 'To Find God' and a few verses from his noble 'Litany to the Holy Spirit':—

'Weigh me the fire, or canst thou find
A way to measure out the wind;
Distinguish all those floods that are
Mixed in that watery theatre;
And taste thou them as saltless there
As in their channel first they were.
Tell me the people that do keep
Within the kingdoms of the deep;
Or fetch me back that cloud again,
Beshivered into seeds of rain;
Tell me the motes, dust, sand, and spears
Of corn, when summer shakes their ears;
Show me that world of stars, and whence
They noiseless spill their influence;
This if thou canst, then show me Him
That rides the glorious Cherubim.'

'In the hour of my distress,
When temptations me oppress,
And when I my sins confess,
Sweet Spirit, comfort me.

* * * * *
When the house doth sigh and weep,
And the world is drowned in sleep,
Yet mine eyes the watch do keep,
Sweet Spirit, comfort me.

* * * * *
When the passing-bell doth toll,
And the furies in a shoal
Come to fright a parting soul,
Sweet Spirit, comfort me.

* * * * *
When the tempter me pursu'th,
With the sins of all my youth,
And half-damns me with untruth,
Sweet Spirit, comfort me.

* * * * *
When the judgment is revealed,
And that opened which was sealed,
When to Thee I have appealed,
Sweet Spirit, comfort me.'

By his 'Noble Numbers' Herrick has a place among the religious poets, and perhaps ought to be reckoned inferior to none of them, though the writings of one of his contemporaries are far more familiar to most readers of the literature of devotion. This is George Herbert, whose poems

George Herbert, 1593-1633. 'The Temple; or, Sacred Poems and Private Ejaculations,' is a collection of pious poems, in which the author displays his zeal for virtue with considerable mastery over metrical form and just sufficient of the current taste for conceits to give his work a pleasing savour of old-world quaintness, without much of that overstraining which makes a great portion of the verse of this age distasteful to the modern reader. Fine if somewhat commonplace ideas abound, and he generally expresses himself with a simple manliness which makes his writings commonly acceptable, even where we miss the higher graces of poetry. In these lines, perhaps, he strikes his truest, sweetest notes :—

Sweet day, so cool, so calm, so bright,
 The bridal of the earth and sky,
 The dew shall weep thy fall to-night,
 For thou must die.

Sweet rose, whose angry hue and brave
 Bids the rash gazer wipe his eye,
 Thy root is ever in its grave,
 And thou must die.

Sweet spring, full of sweet days and roses
 A box where sweets compacted lie,
 My music shows ye have your closes,
 And all must die,

Only a sweet and virtuous soul,
 Like seasoned timber, never gives;
 But though the whole world turns to coal,
 Then chiefly lives.'

'Divinest love lies in this book,' writes Crashaw of Herbert's 'Temple,' in the lines which occur in his own 'Steps to the Temple' [1646], a work which owed its title (and little more) to Herbert. Crashaw was a Fellow of Peterhouse at Cambridge in 1644, when he was ejected for refusing to take the Covenant; he went abroad, journeying to Rome, and turned Roman Catholic, dying as Canon of Loretto in 1650. 'He was, more than Donne, a follower of Marini,' says Hallam . . . 'it is difficult, in general, to find anything in Crashaw that bad taste has not deformed.' Though this is perfectly true, it must be remembered that Crashaw more than makes up for his 'bad taste' by bursts and flashes of poetry such as is to be rarely, if ever, found in any of his contemporaries but Milton, and that he exhibits at times wonderful charms of metre and diction, often in the midst of (what seem to the nineteenth-century reader) his worst offences. He is one of those writers of whom it is most impossible to give the reader any adequate idea by description, for the material of his work needs few words, and no quotation of any one poem or of any few consecutive verses can give a just notion of what for want of another word one must call his 'inspiration.' The very spirit of 'imagination all compact' breathes out at one moment through a word, a phrase, a few lines, and then seems to leave him to creep along on the crutches

Richard
 Crashaw,
 c. 1615-1650.

of his ingenuity and intellect till the divine wind blows again. One can scarcely read his poem of 'The Weeper' without some of that feeling of exaltation and rapture, which beggars analysis and is only to be got from the sorcery of the great enchanters who lift us for the time above the earth. One thinks involuntarily of the lines in Milton's 'Ode on the Nativity':—

'For if such holy song
Enwrap our fancy long,
Time will run back and fetch the Age of Gold;
And speckled Vanity
Will sicken soon and die,
And leprous Sin will pass from earthly mould;
And Hell itself will pass away,
And leave her dolorous mansions to the peering day.'

Yet there are undeniably in this very poem of 'The Weeper' (and for that matter, I suppose, in Milton's 'Ode') examples enough of that 'bad taste' which Hallam mentions. We give a few stanzas, though selection does him injustice:—

'Not the soft gold which
Steals from the amber-weeping tree,
Makes sorrow half so rich
As the drops distilled from thee.¹
Sorrow's best jewels lie in these
Caskets, of which heaven keeps the keys.

When Sorrow should be seen
In her brightest majesty,
(For she is a queen),
Then is she dressed by none but thee
Then and only then she wears
Her richest pearls,—I mean thy tears.

Not in the evening's eyes,
When they red with weeping are
For the sun that dies,
Sits Sorrow with a face so fair;
Nowhere but here did ever meet
Sweetness so sad, sadness so sweet.

* * * *

Not, "So long she lived,"
Will thy tomb report of thee,
But, "so long she grieved,"
Thus must we date thy memory.

¹ The poem is an address to Mary Magdalene.

Others by days, by months, by years,
Measure their ages—thou, by tears.

* * * *

Whither away so fast?
O whither? for the sluttish earth
Your sweetness cannot taste,
Nor does the dust deserve your birth.
Whither haste ye then? O say
Why ye trip so fast away?

We go not to seek
The darlings of Aurora's bed,
The rose's modest cheek,
Nor the violet's humble head.
No such thing,—we go to meet
A worthier object, our Lord's feet.

Of his metrical paraphrases of the Psalms there are passages—and there are scarcely such in any others—which are not contemptible beside the original, as where, for instance, the captive sings of Jerusalem—

‘Ah! sooner may
This hand forget the mastery
Of music's dainty touch, than I
The music of thy memory.’

The ‘Hymn to Saint Teresa,’ beginning with ‘Love, thou art absolute, sole lord of life and death,’ and the apology for this ‘weak and worthless song,’ as he calls it, which was ‘writ when the author was yet a Protestant,’ contain most musical lines and felicitous phrases, while the close of ‘The Flaming Heart’ has been highly praised. From his ‘Wishes to his (supposed) Mistress,’

‘Whoe'er she be,
That not impossible she,
That shall command my heart and me,

let us extract two or three lines :—

‘Life that dares send
A challenge to his end,
And when it comes say, “Welcome, friend!”
Sydneyan showers
Of sweet discourse, whose powers
Can crown old Winter's head with flowers.

* * * *

Let her full glory,
My fancies, fly before ye;
Be ye my fictions, but her story."

'A holy man is only happy,' writes Habington, another William Roman Catholic poet. 'Infelicity and sin,' he Habington, 1605-1654. continues,

'were born twins; or, rather, like some prodigy with two bodies; both draw and expire the same breath. Catholic faith is the foundation on which he erects religion, knowing it a ruinous madness to build in the air of a private spirit, or on the sands of any new schism. His impiety is not so bold to bring divinity down to the mistake of reason, or to deny those mysteries his apprehension reacheth not. His obedience moves still by direction of the magistrate; and should conscience inform him that the command is unjust, he judgeth it nevertheless high treason by rebellion to make good his tenets.'

Thus he expresses his views in 1640, when publishing the final section of 'Castara,' which section is devoted to his pious songs. He was the son of a Worcestershire gentleman, who, after enforced retirement from state affairs, spent his days on his estate at Hindlip, occupying himself with antiquarian studies. The poet was educated at the Jesuits' College at St. Omer, with a view to his entering the priesthood, which, however, he did not do. He fell in love with a lady of noble family, whom he celebrated in his verses as 'Castara,' and on whom he continued to write after her marriage with him. 'A Mistress,' the first section of 'Castara,' was collected and published in 1634, and was followed in the next year by the second part, 'A Wife,' together with eight elegies on 'A Friend and Kinsman.' The 'Holy Man' section, of which we have already spoken, apparently owes its title of Part III. of 'Castara' to a desire for symmetry, as it has no organic connection with the earlier portions. Since in his love poems his devotions are all addressed to one lady, whose chastity he is ever extolling, while

¹ In the little group of poets who deal with religious subjects, among which the last-mentioned are the chief, are included Henry Vaughan (1622-1695) and Francis Quarles (1592-1644). The best known specimen of the latter's voluminous productions is entitled 'Emblems, Moral and Divine' (1635): it was once very popular, but is now held in low esteem, and has never received much praise from the critics. Vaughan's chief work is entitled 'Silex Scintillans' (1650-1656); one or two of his poems display considerable gifts. Henry More (1614-1687) may also be mentioned here; in his main work, 'The Song of the Soul,' he attempts to expound his philosophical doctrines in verse.

he ostentatiously calls attention to the purity of his own passion for her, he has received much praise from those who are disgusted by the frequent changes of mistresses and the frank descriptions of their physical attractions in the greater lyrists of the age. Yet it may be doubted whether his sickly incense to the angel in the house is not more unhealthy than the perfumes Herrick sometimes burns on other altars, and it is certainly not nearly so fragrant. However, he is a fair wielder of metres, and full as he is of reminiscences of the Elizabethan sonneteers—one might almost say that the bulk of 'Castara' is the last of these sonnet series—strikes out ever and again a line or two of remarkable beauty; nor is real passion, though he is given the credit of expressing it mainly on the strength of the known facts of his life, altogether absent from his verse. Other passages as wonderful as this, though not common in him, are sometimes to be found:—

'We saw and wooed each other's eyes,
My soul contracted then with thine,
And both burned in one sacrifice,
By which our marriage grew divine.'

Had he often written in this high strain (how high it is let any one see by noticing the drop from this stanza to the five praiseworthy ones which follow it), his name would have ranked with those of the great love-lyrists. As it is, he preserves a fairly elevated level better perhaps in his 'Elegies' than elsewhere:—

'Go stop the swift-winged moments in their flight
To their yet unknown coast; go hinder night
From its approach on day, and force day rise
From the fair cast of some bright beauty's eyes:
Else vaunt not the proud miracle of verse.
It hath no power:—for mine from the black hearse
Redeems not Talbot, who, cold as the breath
Of winter, coffined lies; silent as death
Stealing on the anch'rite, who even wants an ear
To breathe into the soft expiring prayer.
For had thy life been by thy virtues spun
Out to a length thou hadst outlived the sun,
And closed the world's great eye: or were not all
Our wonders fiction, from thy funeral
Thou hadst received new life, and lived to be
The conqueror o'er death inspired by me.

But all we poets glory in is vain
 And empty triumph : Art cannot regain
 One poor hour lost, nor rescue a small fly
 By a fool's finger destinate to die.
 Live then in thy true life, great soul ; for, set
 At liberty by death, thou owest no debt
 To exacting Nature : live, free from the sport
 Of time and fortune, in yon starry court
 A glorious potentate, while we below
 But fashion ways to mitigate our woe.'

We leave these poets, in whom some of the Elizabethan spirit remained, to turn to those who are looked on as forerunners of the new age, of the correct post-Restoration bards. For 'the sweetness of English verse,' declares Dryden, 'was never understood or practised' by the earlier poets, and 'they can produce nothing so courtly writ, or which expresses so much the conversation of a gentleman, as Sir John Suckling ; nothing so even, sweet, and flowing as Mr. Waller ; nothing so majestic, so correct as Sir John Denham ; nothing so elevated, so copious, and full of spirit as Mr. Cowley'¹ ; and elsewhere the same great writer hails Waller and Denham as the first who taught the proper ways of handling English verse. Posterity has not confirmed the eulogy of the great classic poet ; but it is right for us to notice the estimate in which these writers were held by their younger contemporaries, as well as to observe the particular service attributed to them.

Waller, who inherited a large property while yet a child, entered Parliament² very young, after an education at Eton and Cambridge. 'His political and poetical life began nearly together,' says Johnson. 'In his eighteenth year he wrote the poem that appears first in his works, "On the Prince's Escape at St. Andero," a piece which justifies the observation . . . that he attained, by a felicity like instinct, a style which perhaps will never be obsolete' ; and that 'were we to judge only by the wording, we could not know what was writ at twenty and what at fourscore.' His versification was in his first essay such as it

¹ 'Essay on Dramatic Poesy.'

² Perhaps before he was eighteen, as member for Agmondesham (Amersham, in Buckinghamshire), where his estates were. Waller's mother was a sister of Hampden so that the poet was thus connected with the Anti-Royalist party by birth.

appears in his last performance.¹ As an example of this versification, so admirable to his successors, but now long 'obsolete,' let us take a few lines from this poem :—

'What the prophetic Muse intends, alone
To him that feels the secret wound is known.
With the sweet sound of this harmonious lay,
About the keel delighted dolphins play ;
So sure a sign of sea's ensuing rage,
Which must anon this royal troop engage ;
To whom soft sleep seems more secure and sweet,
Within the town commanded by our fleet.
These mighty peers placed in the gilded barge,
Proud with the burthen of so brave a charge,
With painted oars the youths begin to sweep
Neptune's smooth face, and cleave the yielding deep :
Which soon becomes the seat of sudden war
Between the wind and tide that fiercely jar.'

These verses, it will be seen, have the smoothness and finish and the neat closing of the sense with the line that is characteristic of the writers of 'correct' classical verse. It is to be observed, however, that some additional polish may have been given to them between the time of their composition and the publication of the first volume of his poems in 1645. Nevertheless this would take nothing from his reputation as the founder of the new order, for the only other important writer of this style of verse before the Restoration is Denham, who is undoubtedly his disciple.²

Waller's elegant love-songs are more valued nowadays than any other of his productions, and justly give him a very great reputation as a lyricist. Before quoting a specimen let us briefly finish the tale of his life and work. After an early marriage, which left him a widower at the age of five-and-twenty, he paid a long courtship in verse to 'Sacharissa' (Lady Dorothea Sidney), whose charms inspired his most polished lyrics, or whose name, at any rate, served as a peg whereon to hang these exquisite but by no means

¹ 'By the perusal of Fairfax's translation of "Tasso" [pub. 1600], to which, as Dryden relates, he confessed himself indebted for the smoothness of his numbers, and by his own nicety of observation, he had already formed such a system of metrical harmony as he never afterwards much needed, or much endeavoured, to improve. Denham corrected his numbers by experience, and gained ground gradually upon the ruggedness of his age ; but what was acquired by Denham was inherited by Waller.'—JOHNSON.

² His 'Cooper's Hill' appeared (anonymously) in 1641.

passionate trifles.¹ When Parliament met again after its long suspension in 1640, Waller ranked among the opponents of the King's demands; but on the outbreak of hostilities he favoured the King's side, though he continued to sit in the Long Parliament. In 1613 he managed to escape punishment for being concerned in a plot on the Royalist behalf, and fled to France. He contrived, however, to return to England again with the permission of Cromwell—to whom he was related through his mother—and inscribed a very fine 'Panegyric To My Lord Protector of the Present Greatness and Joint Interest of his Highness and This Nation,' on whose death he wrote some couplets not lacking in force and dignity. However, at the Restoration he was quite ready with his complimentary rhymes 'To the King upon His Majesty's Happy Return,' and his Majesty was graciously pleased to extend his favour to him again. He sat in Parliament after the Restoration, and obtained from the king the valuable and dignified sinecure the Provostship of Eton. He continued to write and polish his verse nearly up to his death in 1687, being venerated in his later years by the rising classical school as one of the fathers of English poetry.

The following verses are from the 'Panegyric' of Cromwell:—

'Then let the Muses with such notes as there
Instruct us what belongs unto our peace !
Your battles they hereafter shall indite,
And draw the image of our Mars in fight ;

Tell of towns stormed, of armies overrun,
And mighty kingdoms by your conduct won ;
How, while you thundered, clouds of dust did choke
Contending troops, and seas lay hid in smoke.

Illustrious acts high raptures do infuse,
And every conqueror creates a Muse :
Here in low strains your milder deeds we sing ;
But there, my lord ! we'll bays and olive bring'

¹ She was not to be subdued by the powers of verse, but rejected his addresses, it is said, with disdain, and drove him away to solace his disappointment with Amoret or Phillis. She married in 1639 the Earl of Sunderland, who died at Newbury in the King's cause; and in her old age, meeting somewhere with Waller, asked him when he would again write such verses upon her. "When you are as young, madam," said he, "and as handsome as you were."—JOHNSON.

'To crown your head, while you in triumph ride
O'er vanquished nations, and the sea beside ;
While all your neighbour princes unto you,
Like Joseph's sheaves, pay reverence and bow.'¹

Here are the famous lines 'On a Girdle':—

'That which her slender waist confined
Shall now my joyful temples bind :
No monarch but would give his crown,
His arms might do what this has done.

It was my heaven's extremest sphere,
The pale which held my lovely deer ;
My joy, my grief, my hope, my love,
Did all within this circle move !

A narrow compass ! and yet there
Dwelt all that's good, and all that's fair :
Give me but what this ribbon bound,—
Take all the rest the sun goes round.'

In such productions he is at his best, where the neat form of his verse matches the wit and cleverness of his thoughts: his songs have none of the natural fire of the Elizabethan lyrists; but he often has the art of studding them with acute epigrammatic turns, which do not develop into glaring and offensive conceits; something of this we see in these lines of 'Apology for having loved before':—

'To man that was in the evening made
Stars gave the first delight ;
Admiring in the gloomy shade
Those little drops of light.
Then at Aurora, whose fair hand
Removed them from the skies,
He gazing towards the east did stand,
She entertained his eyes.

But when the bright sun did appear,
All those he 'gan despise ;
His wonder was determined there,
And could no higher rise ;
He neither might nor wished to know
A more refulgent light :
For that (as mine your beauties now)
Employed his utmost might.'

¹ Johnson gives another instance of Waller's brazen wit in connection with the superiority of the Panegyric of Cromwell over the lines on the Restoration. 'It is reported that when the king told Waller of the disparity, he answered, "*Poets, sir, succeed better in fiction than in truth.*"'

When Crashaw died in 1650, his elegy was sung by one who, brought up in the same school of poetic extravagances and fantasticism, was turning from it towards the trimness of versification and neatness of intellect now beginning to come into vogue in English verse. When Cowley laments the death of his 'poet and saint,' whose genius he venerates, he does it in couplets which have much of those qualities that Dryden praised Waller for teaching us:—

'Ah, wretched we, poets of earth, but thou
Wert living the same poet which thou'rt now;
Whilst angels sing to thee their airs divine,
And joy in an applause as great as thine;
Equal society with them to hold,
Thou need'st not make new songs, but say the old.

Cowley began to write as a precocious schoolboy, his 'Poetical Blossoms' being published in 1633, when the author was at Westminster School. From 1636 to 1643 he was at Cambridge, and during this period is said to have written the greater part of his 'Davideis, a Sacred Poem of the Troubles of David,' which was not, however, published till the collection of his works in folio in the year 1656. A comedy ('Love's Riddle') also belongs to these years. On the outbreak of the civil strife, Cowley showed himself a strong partisan of the King's cause; he left Cambridge—where the Parliamentarians had the upper hand—in 1643, betook himself to Oxford, and after its surrender followed the Queen to Paris, where he was employed as court-secretary. It is possible that during his stay in France the influence of French poetry may have helped to partly transform him from Romantic to Classic, to make of the young Cambridge Marinist one who to some extent followed Waller and Denham, and helped largely to found a new school. His collection of love-poems entitled 'The Mistress' had appeared in 1647; 'The Guardian,' a comedy, later entitled 'Cutter of Coleman Street,' was published in 1650. In 1656 he returned to England for a while, and a folio edition of his writings was then published, to which large additions were subsequently made. He got himself suspected by the Protector, in spite of an ode to 'Excellent Brutus.' At the death

of Cromwell he managed to retreat to France again, coming back to England on the Restoration. He turned to the study of science in his later years, composing a Latin poem on plants, and taking a part in the formation of the Royal Society. He died in 1667.

The 'elevation' and 'fulness of spirit' which Dryden found in Cowley are not at first so obvious to the modern reader as the excess of the qualities characteristic of the 'metaphysical' poets, which indeed so pervade all his verse that there is probably no writer of mark who is so utterly distasteful to our age. His extensive knowledge it is impossible for us to ignore, but on this (and rightly) we are accustomed to set no great store in considering a poet's productions; his good sense, his logical eloquence, and his thoughtfulness scarcely do more perhaps than remind us that he has a right to be regarded as one of the patriarchs of the succeeding 'age of prose and reason'; while some touches of higher gifts of poetry, native in him, are choked and overlaid by his mannerisms. Addison in an amusing passage in the *Spectator* thus describes some of the curiosities of 'The Mistress,' the collection of love-poems in which Cowley—following a well-worn usage—pays court in song to an imaginary fair. 'Cowley, observing the cold regard of his mistress's eyes, and at the same time their power of producing love in him, considers them as burning-glasses made of ice; and finding himself able to live in the greatest extremities of love, concludes the torrid zone to be habitable. When his mistress has read his letter writ in juice of lemon by holding it to the fire, he desires her to read it over a second time by Love's flames. When she weeps, he wishes it were inward heat that distilled these drops from the limbec. When she is absent he is beyond eighty, that is thirty degrees nearer the pole than when she is with him. His ambitious love is a fire that naturally mounts upwards; his happy love is the beams of heaven, and his unhappy love flames of hell. When it does not let him sleep, it is a flame that sends up no smoke; when it is opposed by counsel and advice, it is a fire that rages the more by the wind's blowing upon it. Upon the dying of a tree in which he had cut his loves, he observes that his written flames had

burned up and withered the tree. When he resolves to give over his passion, he tells us that one burnt like him for ever dreads the fire. His heart is an *Ætna*, that instead of *Vulcan's* shop encloses *Cupid's* forge in it. His endeavouring to drown his love in wine is throwing oil upon the fire. He would insinuate to his mistress that the fire of love, like that of the sun (which produces so many living creatures), should not only warm but beget. Love, in another place, cooks pleasure at his fire. Sometimes the poet's heart is frozen in every breast, and sometimes scorched in every eye. Sometimes he is drowned in tears and burnt in love, like a ship set on fire in the middle of the sea.' This is not a caricature of Cowley's method of dealing with love; it may serve as an example of his manner in general, as well as of that of all the metaphysicals from *Donne* (not to say from *Lyly*) downwards. But Cowley, says *Johnson*, was 'almost the last of that race, and undoubtedly the best.'¹

After this description of 'The Mistress,' we shall do well to quote a few lines here and there from it not marred by offensive straining, though perhaps there are not many such worth reproducing:—

'Love in her sunny eyes doth basking play;
Love walks the pleasant mazes of her hair;
Love doth on both her lips for ever stray,
And sows and reaps a thousand kisses there;
In all her outward parts Love's always seen;
But oh! he never went within.

* * * * *

With me, alas! quite contrary it fares;
Darkness and death lie in my weeping eyes;
Despair and paleness in my face appears.
And grief and fear, Love's greatest enemies.
But, like the Persian tyrant, love within
Keeps his proud court and ne'er is seen.

By Heaven! I'll tell her boldly that 'tis she!
Why should she ashamed or angry be
To be beloved by me?
The gods may give their altars o'er,

¹ Addison concludes his remarks on 'mixed wit' with the observation that this 'admirable poet . . . had as much true wit as any author that ever writ, and indeed all other talents of an extraordinary genius.'

They'll smoke but seldom any more,
If none but happy men may them adore.

* * * *

Compared with her, all things so worthless prove,
That nought on earth can towards her move,
Till it be exalted by her love.

Equal to her, alas ! there's none ;

She like a deity is grown,

That must create, or else must be alone.

If there be man who thinks himself so high

As to pretend equality,

He deserves her less than I ;

For he would cheat for his relief,

And one would give with lesser grief

To an undeserving beggar than a thief.'

Of the 'Davideis, a Sacred Poem of the Troubles of David,' not much need be said. Planned on a large scale, only four books were completed ; but they are not such as to cause us to yearn for the remainder. A few of Cowley's couplets may be given as a specimen of his treatment of the subject and handling of the metre :—

'With that, with his long tail he lashed his breast,
And horribly spoke out in looks the rest.
The quaking powers of Night stood in amaze,
And at each other first could only gaze ;
A dreadful silence filled the hollow place,
Doubling the native terrors of Hell's face ;
Rivers of flaming brimstone, which before
So loudly ranged, crept softly by the shore ;
No hiss of snakes, no clank of chains, was known—
The souls amidst their tortures durst not groan.'

This was not the way in which the English epic was destined but a few years after to be written.

The 'Pindaric Odes' form a class of composition which Cowley first introduced into English, and which were highly esteemed and frequently imitated for a long period. Single lines of beauty are not infrequent, and often there is stateliness in his diction and verse ; but the attempt to give us an English Pindar by means of irregular metres and 'unusual and bold figures,' marred as it is by Cowley's habitual mannerisms carried to excess, scarcely resulted in the production of any addition to the treasures of our poetry. The concluding stanza of the ode on 'The Resurrection' describes

his 'Pindaric Pegasus' with sufficiently painful accuracy, and is not itself an unfair specimen of his work in this kind:—

'Stop, stop, my Muse! allay thy vigorous heat,
 Kindled at a hint so great;
 Hold thy Pindaric Pegasus closely in,
 Which does to rage begin,
 And this steep hill would gallop up with violent course;
 'Tis an unruly and a hard-mouthed horse,
 Fierce and unbroken yet,
 Impatient of the spur or bit;
 Now prances stately, and anon flies o'er the place;
 Disdains the servile law of any settled pace,
 Conscious and proud of his own natural force,
 'Twill no unskilful touch endure,
 But flings writer and reader too that sits not sure.'

It is to be feared that the writer seldom 'sits sure' in these Odes, and the reader even more rarely; while as to the unruly and hard-mouthed condition of the steed there is little doubt. Of course there are much finer things in the Odes than these,—that 'To Mr. Hobbes' is probably altogether the best,—but it is unnecessary for us to occupy our space with a further quotation from them.

Among his early compositions 'A Vote' [Wish] is direct, easy, and free from meretricious ornament, while the three closing stanzas have a simple dignity that quite justified Cowley in reprinting them in the 'Essays' published towards the end of his life. In the miscellaneous poems, the lines 'On the Death of Mr. Jordan,' master at Westminster, contain a fine eulogy on Cowley's teacher. The ode 'On the Death of Mr. William Hervey' is, in single lines and short passages, a very beautiful composition, and is everywhere full of feeling. 'The Davideis' is unfit to be mentioned in the same age as 'Paradise Lost'; but the elegy on Hervey, different as it is from 'Lycidas,' is by no means contemptible beside it:—

'Say, for you saw us, ye immortal lights,
 How oft unwearied have we spent the nights,
 Till the Ledaean stars, so famed for love,
 Wondered at us from above.
 We spent them not in toys, in lusts, or wine;
 But search of deep philosophy,
 Wit, eloquence, and poetry—
 Arts which I loved, for they, my friend, were thine.

'Ye fields of Cambridge, our dear Cambridge, say,
 Have ye not seen us walking every day?
 Was there a tree about that did not know
 The love betwixt us two?
 Henceforth, ye gentle trees, for ever fade;
 Or your sad branches thicker join,
 And into darksome shades combine,
 Dark as the grave wherein my friend is laid.'

In 'The Chronicle,' which Johnson calls 'a composition unrivalled and alone,' we have a humorous ballad, which moves nimbly along somewhat in the strain of the libretto of a modern comic opera. It is pleasant enough to read, and gives us a glimpse of art concealing art which is too rare in Cowley; but probably most readers will agree with us that Johnson exaggerated its merits¹ :—

'Margarita first possessed
 (If I remember well) my breast,
 Margarita first of all;
 But when awhile the wanton maid
 With my restless heart had played,
 Martha took the flying ball.
 Martha soon did it resign
 To the beauteous Catherine.
 Beauteous Catherine gave place
 (Though loth and angry she to part
 With the possession of my heart)
 To Eliza's conquering face.

* * *

Mary then and gentle Anne
 Both to reign at once began;
 Alternately they swayed.
 And sometimes Mary was the fair,
 And sometimes Anne the crown did wear,
 And sometimes both I obeyed.'

In the 'Anacreontics' he appears also in a pleasant vein, keeping his tripping octosyllabics free from the offences of his more elaborate work. In the ode entitled 'The Complaint,' the subject of his own ill success in life is treated

¹ But, as ever, his weighty words are well worth study: 'Such gaiety of fancy, such facility of expression, such varied similitude, such a succession of images, and such a dance of words, it is in vain to expect except from Cowley. His strength always appears in his agility; his volatility is not the flutter of a light, but the bound of an elastic mind. His levity never leaves his learning behind it; the moralist, the politician, and the critic mingle their influence even in this airy frolic of genius. To such a performance Suckling could have brought the gaiety, but not the knowledge; Dryden could have supplied the knowledge but not the gaiety.'

with philosophical if melancholy fortitude, and the manner is, on the whole, dignified. In spite of a cumbrous ode upon his Majesty's restoration when every verse-maker was composing on this inspiring theme, Cowley had missed the reward he coveted and had fairly earned; but though he has lost 'the Rachel, for which twice seven years or more' he had laboured, he yet has some hope, it appears:—

' O thou fallacious Muse !
Kings have long hands, they say ; and though I be
So distant, they may reach at length to me.
However, of all the princes, thou
Shouldst not reproach rewards for being small or slow ;
Thou who rewardest but with popular breath,
And that too after death !'

Among his productions published after the Restoration are his 'Essays in Prose and Verse.' Of the verse nothing more need be said; but this is a fitting point to speak of him as a writer of prose, in which, though his historical position is not so important, he achieved more absolute success than in verse. If in the latter we see him as the representative of the joiner of old and new fashions, in prose he belongs almost entirely to the new. As we read him, we feel that we are lifted from the unwieldiness of much of the older prose to the smoother, clearer dexterity of the modern world. Modern prose, indeed, we might date from the Restoration, and take Cowley and Dryden as its first considerable exponents. Unlike his verse, his prose has no over-ornamentation; its diction is choice without affectation. 'No author ever kept his verse and his prose at a greater distance from each other. His thoughts are natural, and his style has a smooth and placid equability which has never yet obtained its due commendation. Nothing is far-sought or hard-laboured, but all is easy without feebleness, and familiar without grossness.'¹ We select as a specimen of Cowley's prose a part of the interesting lines from his preface to the 1656 folio, in which he apologises for its publication:—

' Upon these considerations I have been persuaded to overcome all the just repugnancies of my own modesty, and to produce these

¹ Johnson.

poems to the light and view of the world; not as a thing that I approved of in itself, but as a less evil, which I chose rather than to stay till it were done for me by somebody else, either surreptitiously before, or avowedly after, my death; and this will be more excusable, when the reader shall know in what respects he may look upon me as dead, or at least a dying person, and upon my Muse in this action as appearing like the Emperor Charles the Fifth, and assisting at her own funeral.

'For, to make myself absolutely dead in a poetical capacity, my resolution at present is never to exercise any more that faculty. It is, I confess, but seldom seen that the poet dies before the man; for when we once fall in love with that bewitching art, we do not use to court it as a mistress, but marry it as a wife, and take it for better or worse, as an inseparable companion of our whole life. But as the marriages of infants do but rarely prosper, so no man ought to wonder at the diminution or decay of my affection to poesy, to which I had contracted myself so much under age, and so much to my own prejudice in regard to those more profitable matches which I might have made among the richer sciences. As for the portion which this brings of fame, it is an estate (if it be any, for men are not oftener deceived in their hopes of widows than in their opinion of *cæci monumentum ære perennius*) that hardly ever comes in whilst we are living to enjoy it, but is a fantastical kind of reversion to our own selves: neither ought any man to envy poets this posthumous and imaginary happiness, since they find commonly so little in present that it may be truly applied to them which St. Paul speaks of the first Christians—*If their reward be in this life, they are of all men the most miserable*.

'And if in quiet and flourishing times they meet with so small encouragement, what are they to expect in rough and troubled ones? If wit be such a plant that it scarcely receives heat enough to preserve it alive in the summer of our cold climate, how can it choose but wither in a long and a sharp winter? A warlike, various, and a tragical age is best to write of, but worst to write in.'

We may conclude this account of Cowley with a few more of Johnson's remarks on him:—"In the perusal of the "*Davideis*," as of all Cowley's works, we find wit and learning unprofitably squandered. Attention has no relief; the affections are never moved; we are sometimes surprised, but never delighted, and find much to admire, but little to approve. Still, however, it is the work of Cowley, of a mind capacious by nature and replenished by study. . . . In the general review of Cowley's poetry it will be found that he wrote with abundant fertility, but negligent or unskilful selection; with much thought, but with little imagery; that he is never pathetic, and rarely sublime;

but always either ingenious or learned, either acute or profound.¹

There is a description of Cowley's genius by Denham, the
 Sir John 'majestic and correct,' who, with Cowley and
 Denham, Waller, is to be regarded as having done much to
 1615-1668. bring into vogue the 'classic' poetry which pre-
 vailed for more than a century, of which Dryden and Pope
 are the greater exponents. Its day was a long one, but has
 now been long over: almost as soon, for instance, would one
 now assent to Denham's comparison of Shakespeare, Spenser,
 Jonson, and Fletcher with Cowley, to the latter's advantage,
 as to Dr. Johnson's description of Denham himself as 'one
 of the fathers of English poetry'; yet what he means to
 express is quite true, and quite clear from the words he then
 cites from Prior: 'Denham and Waller improved our ver-
 sification, and Dryden perfected it.' If to have largely
 helped to mould and to impose on succeeding writers the
 (correct) couplet could entitle a writer to such praise, Denham
 deserves it; since the time, however, dating from the third
 quarter of the eighteenth century, when the heroic couplet
 and the method of the classical school have ceased to be
 considered the ideal metre and manner of poetry, Denham's
 achievements have not been reckoned of great importance.
 'He takes the same place in English poetry,' says Mr.
 Gosse, 'as is taken in French by Chapelain and other hard
 versifiers of the beginning of the seventeenth century, who
 had lost the romantic fervour and had not yet gained the
 grace.' His chief work, and the only one by which he is
 remembered, is the topographical poem 'Cooper's Hill,' pub-
 lished in 1641, in which he describes the prospect seen from
 a height near Windsor; the following lines give a fair idea
 of his manner:—

'The stag, now conscious of his fatal growth,
 At once indulgent to his fear and sloth,

¹ Further, 'His character of writing was indeed not his own; he unhappily adopted that which was predominant . . . his manner he had in common with others, but his sentiments were his own; upon every subject he thought for himself. . . . It may be affirmed without any encomiastic fervour that he brought to his poetic labours a mind replete with learning, and that his pages are embellished with all the ornaments which books could supply . . . and that, if he left versification yet improvable, he left likewise from time to time such specimens of excellence as enabled succeeding poets to improve it.'

To some dark covert his retreat had made,
 Where no man's eye, nor heaven's, should invade
 His soft repose, when the unexpected sound
 Of dogs and men his wakeful ear does wound.
 Roused with the noise, he scarce believes his ear,
 Willing to think the illusions of his fear
 Had given this false alarm, but straight his view
 Confirms, that more than all he fears is true.
 Betrayed in all his strengths, the wood beset,
 All instruments, all arts of ruin met,
 He calls to mind his strength, and then his speed,
 His winged heels, and then his armed head,
 With these to avoid, with that his fate to meet;
 But fear prevails, and bids him trust his feet.
So fast he flies, that his reviewing eye
 Has lost the chasers, and his ear the cry;
 Exulting, till he finds their nobler sense
 Their disproportioned speed doth recompense;
 Then curses his conspiring feet, whose scent
 Betrays the safety which their swiftness lent.'

Hallam's remarks on this poem are extremely judicious and just:—'The epithet "majestic" Denham, conferred by Pope,¹ conveys rather too much; but "Cooper's Hill" is no ordinary poem. It is nearly the first instance of vigorous rhythmical couplets,² for Denham is incomparably less feeble than Browne, and less prosaic than Beaumont. Close in thought and nervous in language, like Davies, he is less hard and less monotonous; his cadences are animated and various, perhaps a little beyond the regularity that metre demands; they have been the guide to the finer ear of Dryden. Those who cannot endure the philosophic poetry must ever be dissatisfied with "Cooper's Hill"; no personification, no ardent words, few metaphors beyond the common use of speech, nothing that warms, or melts, or fascinates the heart. It is rare to find lines of eminent beauty in Denham; and equally so to be struck by any one as

¹ Following Dryden—see the quotation from him on p. 203. The line referred to occurs in Pope's 'Windsor Forest,' a 'local' poem inspired by 'Cooper's Hill'; in the 'Essay on Criticism' Pope speaks of

'The easy vigour of a line
 Where Denham's strength and Waller's sweetness join.'

² Meaning here by couplets, such only as conclude the sense with the second line, without 'overflow.'

feeble or low. His language is always well chosen and perspicuous, free from those strange turns of expression frequent in our older poets, where the reader is apt to suspect some error of the press, so irreconcilable do they seem with grammar or meaning. The expletive *do*, which the best of his predecessors use freely, seldom occurs in Denham; and he has, in other respects, brushed away the rust of languid and ineffectual redundances which have obstructed the popularity of men with more native genius than himself.'

Denham's other work is of little account: it consists of a free translation of part of the *Æneid*, some other poems and translations, and a tragedy called 'The Sophy.'² He was one of the Cavalier exiles, and was employed in assisting the Royalist cause abroad during the King's exile.

It remains to say a few words here on Andrew Marvell, the one Puritan of the age besides Milton who achieved distinction in poetry. 'The Garden,' 1621-1678. 'The Bermudas,' and some other short pieces are his best works. 'He has depth of feeling,' says a critic, 'descriptive power, melody; his study of the classics could not fail to teach him form; sometimes we find in him an airy and tender grace which reminds us of the lighter manner of Milton.' He was joint secretary with Milton, and sat in Parliament after the Restoration as member for Hull.

¹ The comparison by Denham between the Thames and his own poetry (adds Hallam) was once celebrated:—

'O could I flow like thee and make thy stream
My bright example, as it is my theme;
Though deep, yet clear; though gentle, yet not dull;
Strong without rage, without o'erflowing full.'

The lines contain nothing but wit, and that wit which turns on a play of words. They are rather ingenious in this respect, and remarkably harmonious, which is probably the secret of their popularity; but as poetry they deserve no great praise.

² i.e. Sultan.

CHAPTER XVIII.

JOHN MILTON (1608—1674).

MILTON was born in Bread Street, Cheapside (London), where his father carried on his avocation of scrivener. The poet was sent to school at St. Paul's, and proceeded, in due course, in his seventeenth year, to Christ's College, Cambridge, which he finally quitted in 1632. He was a most diligent student, and left the university deeply read in the classics, acquainted with Hebrew, and conversant with the literatures of the moderns as well as the ancients—English, Italian, and French. He was, besides, skilled in music, in which he took deep delight, and had found time and inclination to lay the foundations of considerable mathematical knowledge. In spite, however, of his great attainments and his vast love of learning, he did not seek—or, at least, did not obtain—a college fellowship, which, though it might perhaps have enabled him to keep his life free from public cares, would have made it necessary for him to take holy orders. It had been, indeed, his intention at one time to enter the Church, but this he had abandoned 'on coming to some maturity of years,' and when he quitted Cambridge he returned to dwell in his father's house at Horton (in Buckinghamshire) without having fixed on a profession.

⚡ Six years (1632-8) he spent here in study, keeping ever before him the high aim of producing some great work. It was during this time of preparation that before 1639: First Period: Poems written 'L'Allegro,' 'Il Penseroso,' 'Comus,' 'Arcades,' and 'Lycidas' were written. Previous to this, besides some less noticeable pieces both in English and Latin, he had written in his college days the gorgeous 'Ode on the Nativity,' and the lines pre-
'Lycidas' fixed to the second folio edition of Shakespeare in

1632. A sonnet, written at the time when his university days were drawing to a close, was intended to accompany a letter to a friend who had tried to persuade him to engage in some profession, instead of tarrying longer amid books and dreams. Milton admits that he is not without misgivings of his own on the wisdom of his conduct, writing:—

‘That you may see that I am something suspicious of myself, and do take notice of a certain belatedness in me, I am the bolder to send you some of my nightward thoughts some little while ago, because they come in not altogether unfitly, made up in a Petrarchian stanza. . . .

‘How soon hath Time, the subtle thief of youth,
Stolen on his wing my three-and-twentieth year!
My hasting days fly on with full career;
But my into spring no bud or blossom shew’th.
 Perhaps my semblance might deceive the truth
 That I to manhood am arrived so near;
 And inward ripeness doth much less appear,
 That some more timely-happy spirits endu’th.
 Yet be it less or more, or soon or slow,
 It shall be still in strictest measure even
 To that same lot, however mean or high,
 Toward which Time leads me, and the will of Heaven
 All is, if I have grace to use it so,
 As ever in my great Task-Master’s eye.’

In the two companion poems, ‘L’Allegro’ [The Joyous] and ‘Il Penseroso’ [The Thoughtful], Milton describes life as it appears under two different aspects. ‘Hence, loathed Melancholy,’ cries the joyous youth,—

‘But come, thou Goddess fair and free,
 In heaven yclept Euphrosyne,
 And by men heart-easing Mirth.

* * * *

And in thy right hand lead with thee
 The mountain nymph, sweet Liberty;
 And if I give thee honour due,
 Mirth, admit me of thy crew,
 To live with her and live with thee
 In unreproved pleasures free;
 To hear the lark begin his flight,
 And, singing, startle the dull night,
 From his watch-tower in the skies,
 Till the dappled dawn doth rise;
 Then to come, in spite of sorrow,
 And at my window bid good-morrow,

Through the sweetbriar or the vine,
Or the twisted eglantine.

* * * *

Oft listening how the hounds and horn
Cheerly rouse the slumbering morn,
From the side of some hoar hill,
Through the high wood echoing shrill :
Sometimes walking, not unseen,
By hedgerow elms on hillocks green,
Right against the eastern gate
Where the great sun begins his state,
Robed in flames and amber light,
The clouds in thousand liveries dight ;
While the ploughman, near at hand,
Whistles o'er the furrowed land,
And the milkmaid singeth blithe,
And the mower whets his scythe,
And every shepherd tells his tale
Under the hawthorn in the dale.'

Il Penseroso bids 'vain deluding joys' begone: he will hear the nightingale, in her sweetest, saddest plight,' not the lark. 'Tragedy in sceptred pall' shall content him more than Hymen with the 'pomp and feast and revelry, mask and antique pageantry,' dear to L'Allegro. To 'soft Lydian airs' he prefers the solemn notes of the organ :—

'But let my due feet never fail
To walk the studious cloister's pale,
And love the high embow'd roof,
With antique pillars massy-proof,
And storied windows richly dight,
Casting a dim religious light.
There let the pealing organ blow,
To the full-voiced choir below,
In service high and anthems clear,
As may with sweetness, through mine ear,
Dissolve me into ecstasies,
And bring all Heaven before mine eyes.
And may at last my weary age
Find out the peaceful hermitage,
The hairy gown and mossy cell,
Where I may sit and rightly spell
Of every star that heaven doth shew
And every herb that sips the dew,
Till old experience do attain
To something like prophetic strain.'

These two masterpieces stand in a class by themselves in our literature. There is nothing like them before Milton (though doubtless he may have been influenced somewhat by Browne's pastorals), there is nothing fit to compare with them since his day. The beauty of the matter is almost surpassed by the technical excellences of the manner. 'They satisfy the critics,' says Hallam, 'and they delight mankind'; and since this is undoubtedly so, it is scarcely necessary to follow him in his praises of the judiciousness of the choice of images, the rapidity of their succession, the variety and pleasing quality of their allusions, the felicitous way in which the leading distinction of the poems is maintained, and the animation of the verse.

'Arcades' is the title of (part of) a masque written for the entertainment of the Countess of Derby (the Lady Strange to whom Spenser's 'Tears of the Muses' is dedicated). It is but short, consisting of some thirty rhymed couplets and three exquisite songs. For the stepson of the same lady, the Earl of Bridgewater, Milton produced what is not only incomparably the finest masque ever written, but also among the greatest of his own works. This is 'Comus,' which was acted at Ludlow Castle on the inauguration of the Earl as Lord President of Wales in 1634, his daughter and sons taking the chief parts in it.¹ The word Comus signifies 'revel.' With Milton (who may have been struck by the name in one of Ben Jonson's

¹ With regard to the splendour of these dramatic entertainments, in which such distinguished amateurs as the King and the Queen condescended to act, the following note (from Professor Masson) may be of interest: 'At this particular time the English court and aristocracy may be said to have been masque-mad. Nothing so magnificent, for example, in the shape of a pageant had ever been seen in England as that got up by the lawyers of the Four Inns of Court in February 1634, "as an expression of their love and duty to their Majesties." Months were spent in the preparation. Shirley was engaged to write the poetry ["The Triumph of Peace"]; Mr. Simon Joy and Mr. Henry Lawes [who composed the music of 'Comus'] to compose the music; Inigo Jones [the famous architect] to construct the machinery. . . . The whole affair cost £21,000. . . . The actors were chiefly handsome lawyers. . . . These shows (says Pattison), in which the dramatic element was subordinated to the pageantry and the music, had been popular at court in the beginning of the century. But the gradual growth of Puritan sentiment throughout the nation was chilling the taste for such entertainments. The masque would have died out but for the publication in 1633 of a violent and one-sided invective against the stage, in Prynne's "Histriomastix." This overt attack occasioned a reaction in favour of the drama, and there was, for a short time, a spasmodic revival of the masque in cavalier and courtly circles. It was during this brief revival that "Comus" was written—a chance thus making the future Puritan poet the last composer of a Cavalier masque.

masques) he is the god of Debauch, born of Bacchus and Circe.¹

In the masque, the heroine, 'The Lady,' loses her brothers in a forest and is taken captive by the lewd god, whose arts however can avail nothing against one guarded as she is by chastity and virtue; by the help of a spirit who watches over her, her brothers find and release her, wresting the magician's poisonous draught from him and putting him and his crew to flight. We quote here some of the lines which 'The Lady' speaks on finding herself alone in the woods:—

'A thousand fantasies
Begin to throng into my memory,
Of calling shapes, and beckoning shadows dire,
And airy tongues that syllable men's names
On sands, and shores, and desert wildernesses.
These thoughts may startle well, but not astound
The virtuous mind, that ever walks attended
By a strong siding champion, Conscience.
O welcome, pure-eyed Faith, white-handed Hope,
Thou hovering angel girt with golden wings,
And thou, unblemished form of Chastity!
I see ye visibly, and now believe
That He, the Supreme Good, to whom all things ill
Are but as slavish officers of vengeance,
Would send a glistering guardian, if need were,
To keep my life and honour unassailed.

* * * *

I did not err : there does a sable cloud
Turn forth her silver lining on the night,
And casts a gleam over this tufted grove :
I cannot halloo to my brothers, but
Such noise as I can make to be heard farthest
I'll venture'

Forthwith she sings this song :—

'Sweet echo, sweetest nymph, that liv'st unseen
Within thy airy shell
By slow Meander's margin green,
And in the violet-embroidered vale
Where the love-lorn nightingale
Nightly to thee her sad song mourneth well :
Canst thou not tell me of a gentle pair
That liketh thy Narcissus are ?

¹ It has been pointed out that the poem owes something—at best a very trifle—to a certain Latin 'Comus' by a Dutch Puteanus, to Peele's 'Old Wives' Tale,' and to Fletcher's 'Faithful Shepherdess.'

O, if thou have
 Hid them in some flowery cave,
 Tell me but where,
 Sweet queen of parley, daughter of the sphere!
 So may'st thou be translated to the skies,
 And give resounding grace to all heaven's harmonies.'

In 'Comus' the poet allegorically depicts the endeavour of incontinent vice to overcome and corrupt virtue, and it is even alleged that the 'Revel-god is a representative of those whom the poet actually regarded as the living votaries of the view of life which he abhorred.'¹ In 'Lycidas,' the beautiful elegy written under the form of a pastoral, whereby the poet has preserved the memory of his college friend Edward King, Milton speaks sternly of the corruptions of the Church, uttering a prophecy of the destruction that shall fall upon it:—

'Last came, and last did go,
 The pilot of the Galilean lake;
 Two massy keys he bore of metals twin
 (The golden opes, the iron shuts amain).
 He shook his mitred locks, and stern bespake:—
 "How well could I have spared for thee, young swain,
 Enow of such as for their bellies' sake,
 Creep, and intrude, and climb into the fold!
 Of other care they little reckoning make
 Than how to scramble at the shearers' feast,
 And shove away the worthy bidden guest.
 Blind mouths! that scarce themselves know how to hold
 A sheep-hook, or have learned aught else the least
 That to the faithful herdsman's art belongs!
 What recks it then? What need they? They are sped;
 And, when they list, their lean and flashy songs
 Grate on their scrannel pipes of wretched straw;
 The hungry sheep look up and are not fed,
 But, swoln with wind and the rank mist they draw,
 Rot inwardly, and foul contagion spread;
 Besides what the grim wolf with privy paw
 Daily devours apace, and nothing said:
 But that two-handed engine at the door
 Stands ready to smite once, and smite no more."'

Such words find a fit place in the mouth of the poet who is now to bid farewell to 'masque, and pastoral, and idyl,' and betake himself to stern political conflict, to controversy

¹ Professor Ward.

and struggle, through which he is destined to pass before he returns again to the Muses as the poet of the great Epic and of 'Samson Agonistes.'

'Lycidas' was written in 1637, towards the close of Milton's residence at Horton. The same year his mother died, and in 1638 the poet—still educating himself, still un-

Italian
Journey,
1638-9.

fixed in any profession—set out to make a tour on the continent. After travelling in Italy, where he conversed with scholars and found appreciative friends, and wrote Latin and Italian verse, he returned home, impelled to cut his journey short by the troublous state of things in England. While abroad, he had heard of the death of his dear friend Charles Diodate in London, and wrote in memory of him the last and chief of his Latin poems, the 'Epitaphium Damonis.'

From Milton's return to England at the end of the summer of 1639 we may date the beginning of the second

Second
Period:
Prose
Works,
Politics,
and Sonnets,
1640-1660.

period of his activity—the period of his political work and prose writings, which extends down to the Restoration. He does not indeed appear to have intended to throw himself at once into politics, for he settled down in London as student and teacher, taking his sister's sons, Edward and John Phillips, and some other lads as pupils. One result of this was the writing of his tractate 'Of Education,' which was published in 1644, addressed to his friend Mr. Samuel Hartlib, who shared Milton's enthusiasm for reform in education. His first prose work, however, was a treatise 'Of Reformation touching Church Discipline in England' (1641), in which he first comes forward as a champion of the Puritans; it was followed by a treatise 'Of Prelatical Episcopacy,' 'Animadversions on the Remonstrants' Defence . . . against Church Smectymnuus,' 'Apology for Smectymnuus,' and 'The Reason of Church Government urged against Prelacy'; these were written 1641-2, the 'Prelatical

¹ The following is Hallam's judgment on his Latin verses :—'They are in themselves full of classical elegance, of thoughts natural and pleasing, of a diction culled with taste from the gardens of ancient poetry, of a versification remarkably well cadenced and grateful to the ear. There is in them, without a marked originality, which Latin verse can rarely admit but at the price of some incorrectness or impropriety, a more individual display of the poet's mind than we usually find.'

Episcopacy' being in answer to the 'Humble Remonstrance' of Joseph Hall, Bishop of Norwich, to which five ministers had retorted under the pseudonym of Smectymnuus.¹

His next set of pamphlets is connected with his unfortunate marriage, which took place in 1643, the bride being ^{Divorce} Mary Powell, the young daughter of a Cavalier ^{Pamphlets.} Oxfordshire gentleman. Very shortly after the marriage she left her husband to visit her parents, and refused to return to him; it was then that his thoughts turned to the laws regulating the dissolution of marriage, and he published his pamphlet 'The Doctrine and Discipline of Divorce,' which called forth alike the condemnation not only of the Episcopalians but also of the Presbyterians, from whom Milton was now rapidly getting separated. Three other pamphlets followed on the same theme ('Judgment of Martin Bucer,' 'Colasterion,' and 'Tetrachordon'); but the deep personal interest which Milton must have had in the subject was terminated by a reconciliation which his wife effected by her complete submission and contrite repentance in 1645, at a time when (it is said) the poet was contemplating a union with another lady. It is to be added that she bore him three daughters, and seems to have lived in peace with him till her death in 1652 (she was then only six-and-twenty), and that Milton sheltered and protected her kinsfolk when they suffered in the Royalist cause.

We now have to deal with what is probably the most famous of Milton's prose writings, as it is the only ^{'Areopagitica.'} one familiar to any but the student—the 'Areopagitica.' By an ordinance which came into operation in 1643, it was rendered obligatory on the author of a new publication to get the licence of the Commissioners appointed to supervise the press before such work could be issued.² Milton set the ordinance at defiance in publishing his first divorce pamphlet without licence and without

¹ The word is formed from the initials of the authors' names—S. Marshall, B. Calamy, T. Young, M. Newcomen, W. Spinstow.

² The regulation of the press was previous to this partly in the hands of the Star-Chamber, the Archbishop of Canterbury and the Bishop of London controlling the granting of licences. 'The fall of the royal authority did not mean the emancipation of the press. The Parliament had no intention of letting go the control which the monarchy had exercised; the incidence of the coercion was to be shifted upon their opponents.'—Pattison.

printer's name, and added insult to injury by dedicating it to the Parliament. He followed this up by an open (and quite unsuccessful) attack on the censorship of the press in the tract which he entitled 'Areopagitica': A Speech for the Liberty of Unlicensed Printing, to the Parliament of England.' Here he denounces the restrictions on liberty of expressing opinion with the stately eloquence and passionate rhetoric of which he was a master. He strays more rarely than is usual with him in prose into labyrinthine constructions and syntactical jungles, while there is none of the rancour and scurrility which mar so much of his polemical prose. 'An intense love of liberty and truth glows through it; the majestic soul of Milton breathes such high thoughts as had not been uttered before.'² It is impossible to select a passage from Milton's prose which does not give too high or too low an idea of his general style. We will, then, choose one here from the 'Areopagitica' which exhibits him at his best:—

'Good and evil we know in the field of this world grow up together almost inseparably; and the knowledge of good is so involved and interwoven with the knowledge of evil, and in so many cunning resemblances hardly to be discerned, that those confused seeds which were imposed upon Psyche as an incessant labour to cull out and sort asunder were not more intermixed. It was from out the rind of one apple tasted that the knowledge of good and evil, as two twins cleaving together, leaped forth into the world. And perhaps this is that doom which Adam fell into of knowing good and evil—that is to say, of knowing good by evil. As therefore the state of man now is, what wisdom can there be to choose, what continuance to forbear, without the knowledge of evil? He that can apprehend and consider vice with all her baits and seeming pleasures, and yet abstain, and yet distinguish, and yet prefer that which is truly better, he is the true wayfaring Christian. I cannot praise a fugitive and cloistered virtue, unexercised and unbreathed, that never sallies out and

¹ The name is taken from the Areopagitic Oration of Isocrates, a written speech like Milton's, also addressed to the national council. Areopagus (Ares' Hill) was the meeting-place of the Athenian *Boule*.

² From Hallam, who, however, adds: 'Yet even here he frequently sinks in a single instant, as is usual with our old writers, from his highest flights to the ground. His intermixture of familiar with learned phraseology is unpleasant, his structure is affectedly elaborate, and he seldom reaches any harmony. If he turns to invective, it is mere ribaldrous vulgarity blended with pedantry; his wit is always poor and without ease. An absence of idiomatic grace, and an use of harsh inversions violating the rules of the language, distinguish in general the [prose] writings of Milton, and require, in order to compensate them, such high beauties as will sometimes occur.'

sees her adversary, but slinks out of the race where that immortal garland is to be run for, not without dust and heat. Assuredly we bring not innocence into the world, we bring impurity much rather; that which purifies us is trial, and trial is by what is contrary. That virtue, therefore, which is but a youngling in the contemplation of evil, and knows not the utmost that vice promises to her followers, and rejects it, is but a blank virtue, not a pure; her whiteness is but an excremental whiteness; which was the reason why our sage and serious poet Spenser, whom I dare be known to think a better teacher than Scotus or Aquinas, describing true temperance under the person of Guion, brings him in with his palmer through the cave of Mammon and the bower of earthly bliss, that he might see and know and yet abstain.'

Milton's is not a prose that will do for everyday purposes; it is too rarely pedestrian. When it is not soaring high aloft amid the clouds, it is only too frequently dragging flabbily and formlessly through the mire.

We must pass over very briefly the rest of Milton's prose and political work, and hasten towards the crowning work of his life. About 1647 he gave up teaching, his father's death having left him with a competence; and in 1649 he accepted the post of Latin Secretary to the Council of State. The 'Eikonoklastes,'¹ and the Latin treatises,² in which he loudly defended his country and poured invective on Salmasius and Morus, have not added anything to the writer's reputation. Unfortunately they were helping to destroy his eyesight. At the time when he was writing the 'Defensio pro Populo,' in 1651, the sight of the left eye had entirely gone, and he tells his readers that now he must either neglect the duty of answering Salmasius, imposed on him by the Parliament, or suffer complete loss of sight. 'I could not but obey that inward monitor, I know not what, that spake to me from Heaven,' he says, and continues his work, becoming totally blind in 1652, the year of his first wife's death. Four years later he married a second time; but the union, which, to judge from the

¹ Image-breaker. This book is an answer to the 'Elkon Basilike; or, the Portraiture of his Most Sacred Majesty in his Solitude and Sufferings,' which was published shortly after the execution of Charles I., and was supposed to have been written by him. Its author was Dr. Gauden, Bishop of Worcester.

² 'Defensio pro Populo Anglicano,' 1651; 'Defensio Secunda,' 1654; 'Pro Se Defensio contra Morum,' 1655.

sonnet to his wife's memory, was of the happiest, was put an end to in little over a year by her death. This is the place perhaps for a word on the Sonnets, the only poetry he

Sonnets. indulged himself in for the score of years following the time when the troubled state of the country called him back from Italy. We have already quoted the sonnet on his twenty-third birthday. There are others which, like this, are purely personal; as, for instance, that which is probably the sublimest of them—the one on his blindness. Some, on the other hand, are partly political, as is this, where he breathes forth his indignation on the massacre of the Vaudois in 1655:—

'Avenge, O Lord, thy slaughtered saints, whose bones
Lie scattered in the Alpine mountains cold;
Even them who kept thy truth so pure of old,
When all our fathers worshipped stocks and stones,
Forget not; in Thy book record their groans
Who were Thy sheep, and in their ancient fold
Slain by the bloody Piedmontese that rolled
Mother with infant down the rocks. Their moans
The vales redoubled to the hills, and they
To heaven. Their martyred blood and ashes sow
O'er all the Italian fields, where still doth sway
The triple tyrant; that from these may grow
A hundredfold, who having learnt Thy way
Early may fly the Babylonian woe.'

In the year 1658, in which Milton lost his beloved second wife, the Protector died, and with him the hope of a continuation of the Commonwealth. Milton remained at his post as Latin Secretary (his assistant-secretary and friend, the poet Andrew Marvell, doing a large part of the work), and continued to write on behalf of the cause he loved, which was, however, now doomed. While Charles was at the gate, and all things were ripe for his return, he was composing treatises and pouring out advice,¹ until the Restoration (May 1660) forced him to look to his personal safety. He lay in hiding for a while, and subsequently in custody for a short time; two of his books were burnt by the common hangman, but no punishment was inflicted on him. And

¹ 'A Treatise of Civil Power in Ecclesiastical Causes,' 'Considerations towards the Likeliest Means to remove Hirelings out of the Church,' 'Ready and Easy Way to establish a Free Commonwealth,' etc. (1659-60).

now, fortunately, his part in political strife was over, and he was free to devote himself entirely to far greater work.

As far back as 1641, at least seventeen years before he actually began to write his great Epic, Milton had in his 'Reason of Church Government' declared his intention of devoting himself to

Third Period: 1660-1674.	'Paradise Lost,' 1667.	'a work not to be raised from the heat of youth or the vapours of wine, like that which flows at waste from the pen of some vulgar amorist, or the trencher-fury of some riming parasite, nor to be obtained by the invocation of Dame Memory and her siren daughters; but by devout prayer to that Eternal Spirit who can enrich with all utterance and knowledge, and sends out His Seraphim with the hallowed fire of His altar to touch and purify the lips of whom He pleases.
—	'Paradise Regained,' 1671.	—
—	'Samson Agonistes,' 1671.	—

What the exact nature of that work was to be he had evidently not quite determined, though the subject which he ultimately selected appears at the head of several score others in a list made out in 1640. Previous to that, he seems to have almost definitely made choice of 'Arthur' as the hero of the great work he intended to write; and, indeed, the lines which occur in the Latin poem, written at Naples (1638-9) to his host Manso, show that his thoughts had early turned that way.¹ However, he does not appear to have commenced any poem on this subject, but between the years 1639-42 he made no less than four schemes, or 'drafts,' for a work which was to be called 'Paradise Lost,' or 'Adam Unparadized.' Of these, two are mere lists of 'the Persons,' whilst the other two are short abstracts, or 'plots,' of a drama, which was evidently the form the poet originally intended to give to his work. During the storms of the Civil Wars, however, the cares and troubles of public employment and controversy left him little leisure for a task

¹ They are thus translated by Cowper:

'Should I recall hereafter into rhyme
The kings and heroes of my native clime?
Arthur, the chief, who, even now, prepares
In subterraneous being, future wars,
With all his martial knights, to be restored
Each to his seat around the federal board!
And oh! if spirit fail me not, disperse
Our Saxon plunderers in triumphant verse.

for which, as he said, 'industriously selected reading, steady observation, insight into all seemly and generous arts and affairs,' were in the highest degree needful; and it was not till the year of Cromwell's death that Milton actually began to carry out his project. After the Restoration, though 'fallen on evil days . . .

And evil tongues,
In darkness, and with dangers compassed round
And solitude,'

he was left to finish his life in peaceful neglect and diligent obscurity. 'Paradise Lost' was finished either in 1663 (when Milton married for the third time) or in one of the two years following, and Milton took the MS. with him to the cottage at Chalfont St. Giles (Buckinghamshire) to which he had retreated to avoid the Plague, which was raging in London in 1665. It was not published till 1667—the delay was probably due to the Fire and the interruption of all business consequent thereon—when it appeared under the title of 'Paradise Lost: a Poem written in Ten Books.' In the second edition, however (1674), it was divided into twelve books (by splitting Books vii. and x.), in which form it has remained. 'Paradise Regained' and 'Samson Agonistes' were published together in 1671, three years before Milton's death. According to an anecdote of Milton's friend, the Quaker Ellwood, the former of the two was written in part, at any rate, at Chalfont, and perhaps was finished there.

'The first thing to be considered in an epic poem is the fable,' says Addison; and in doing this we can scarcely avoid taking 'Paradise Lost' and 'Paradise Regained' together. The former poem deals with the rebellion of the angels, the creation, the temptation of man, and the fall; the second with the temptation of the Son of God, and His victory. The subject-matter is, of course, taken from the Scriptures, but inasmuch as many other writers have dealt with the same or similar themes, there has been much ingenuity spent on trying to find sources from which Milton may have derived some part of his poems. This is not a matter of much, if of any, importance, seeing that the two poems as we have them

'Paradise
Lost' and
'Paradise
Regained.'

bear on every portion of them the stamp of Milton's own peculiar genius, and are in every way his own. It would be strange indeed if in the course of his vast reading the thoughts or expressions of other writers had not here and there suggested to him ideas which are reflected in his works; but there does not seem any reason to think that he in any way 'borrowed' the ideas or 'copied' the writings of others.¹

The 'fable' of 'Paradise Lost,' as Milton tells it, may be roughly divided into three parts: (*a*) the rebellion of the angels and their material strife with God (Books i., ii., iii., and the greater part of v., vi.); (*β*) the creation of mankind, the intercession of the Messiah, and the conditions of man's existence (touched on in Books i., iv., and part of v., vii., viii.); and (*γ*) the wiles of Satan against man, the transgression of Eve and Adam, and their expulsion (Books ix.-xii.). 'Paradise Regained' differs from its predecessor in being rather a dramatic poem than an epic; it is a poem dealing with one episode in the life of Christ, and the only other character in it is Satan. It lacks that 'interest of the story' which 'Paradise Lost' has in the highest degree, notwithstanding the fact that the conclusion is perfectly anticipated by the reader, and the number of human characters is limited to two, who are not introduced till the fourth book, and have no part in Books vi. and vii., and very little in viii. It must be added, however, that the passions depicted as moving Satan and his crew doubtless do much to make them very 'human' in our eyes. One defect in the story has been frequently dwelt on, and that is that Satan, and not Adam, is the hero of the epic. To this it has been answered that Milton had no intention of making Adam his hero, but that Christ is really the heroic Figure of the poem; and this is true enough if we consider 'Paradise Lost' and 'Paradise Regained' together; for in the latter poem Satan is not only vanquished ignominiously, but appears before us a mean, shifty, paltry creature, as

¹ Some of the chief sources from which it has been stated Milton may have derived hints are: Andreini's 'Adamo' (which Voltaire thinks he might have seen acted in Italy), Alfani, Soranzo, Tasso, Marini; Grotius' 'Adamus Exul,' Taubmann's 'Bellum Angelicum'; Jacob Cats, Van Vondel; Cædmon, Sylvester's translation of 'Du Bartas,' Phineas Fletcher, Andrew Ramsay, and a score of others.

contrasted with the haughty, desperate devil of the earlier work. Perhaps, however, the whole question is too inextricably bound up with the amount of faith that the reader places in the details of the story and the particular way in which he may happen to view the relation of gods, demons, and man, to allow of its being in any way adequately criticised from a literary standpoint. We certainly do not see any justification for a laudation of 'the merits of the material for a work of art' on the strength of its not being 'for Hector or for Dido that our sympathy is demanded. It is our happiness or misery that is at stake.'¹ It is quite conceivable that Homer or his hearers may have felt their happiness quite as closely bound up in Hector's as we ours in Adam. In any case, it is obvious that this sort of 'merit' will depend on the reader's, rather than the writer's, taste; so that it appears the way in which the poet handles his theme is a far more important matter than the theme itself, so long as this be neither insignificant nor ridiculous.

The chief characteristics of Milton's epic may be summed up in the word 'sublimity.' His imagination is lofty and grand, his style majestic and sonorous. Magnificent imagery with him seems to be merely the fit and natural accompaniment and expression of magnificent ideas. It is in his sublimest conceptions that his language most aptly fits his thought. When he deals with more commonplace matters (which is seldom enough), the effect is that of second-rate musical compositions played by a great artist on a splendid instrument. 'A feeling of spaciousness such as no other poet gives' is the description given by Lowell of the effect produced by the 'vistas and avenues' of Milton's verse. It would be idle to quote long passages to justify this statement. No one who reads 'Paradise Lost' can fail to be struck at once with this peculiar power of Milton. He can exercise it in half a dozen lines:—

Here let those
Who boast in mortal things, and wondering tell
Of Babel, and the works of Memphian kings,
Learn how their greatest monuments of fame

¹Mark Pattison in the 'English Poets', vol. ii. Addison has praised it on much the same grounds.

And strength and art are easily outdone
By spirits reprobate, and in an hour,
What in an age they, with incessant toil
And hands innumerable, scarce perform.'

P. L., i. 692-699.

He can make us feel it in a few syllables :—

'Who would lose,¹
Though full of pain, this intellectual being,
These thoughts that wander through eternity!'—ii. 148.

Or he can sustain the spell through scores and scores of lines, as in Book xi. and elsewhere.

The prime defects that are to be noted in 'Paradise Lost' are more easily felt than defined in certain parts of the poem, such as in Book vi., where the employment by Satan and his forces of 'devilish engines' (*i.e.* cannon) strikes one as being ludicrous rather than terrible; or in Book ii., where the description of Death and his mother Sin and 'the yelling monsters—hourly conceived and hourly born,' disgusts rather than awes. His use of certain words now and then which raise a comical and commonplace image in our mind, and very often mar the whole of a beautiful passage, is fortunately not frequent. Perhaps the lines 391-396 in Book v. will exemplify this blemish :—

'Raised of grassy turf
Their table was, and mossy seats had round,
And on her ample square, from side to side,
All Autumn piled, though Spring and Autumn here
Danced hand-in-hand. A while discourse they held—
No fear *lest dinner cool.*'

Of the metre Milton uses he himself says :—

'The measure is English heroic verse without rime, as that of Homer in Greek and of Virgil in Latin—rime being no necessary adjunct or true ornament of poem or good verse, in longer works especially, but the invention of a barbarous age, to set off wretched matter and lame metre; graced, indeed, since by the use of some modern poets, carried away by custom, but much to their own vexation, hindrance, and constraint to express many things otherwise, and for the most part worse, than else they would have expressed them. Not without cause, therefore, some both Italian and Spanish poets of prime note have rejected rime both in longer and shorter works, as have also long since our best English tragedies, as a thing of itself to all judicious ears trivial and of no true musical delight; which consists only in apt numbers, fit

The metre
of this
epic.

quantity of syllables, and the sense variously drawn out from one verse into another, not in the jingling sound of like endings—a fault avoided by the learned ancients both in poetry and all good oratory. This neglect, then, of rime so little is to be taken for a defect, though it may seem so perhaps to vulgar readers, that it rather is to be esteemed an example set, the first in English, of ancient liberty recovered to heroic poem from the troublesome and modern bondage of riming.’

It will be seen from the above that Milton rejoiced in the ‘overflow’ from line to line. By its use he is able to introduce a great amount of variety into his versification, inasmuch as the pause in the line shifting wherever sense and harmony require, his verse never becomes monotonous and stiff. The normal decasyllabic heroic line, whether in blank verse or rhyme, is said to consist of five iambs following one after another, as in this line (Pope’s ‘Essay on Man’):—

‘The scále | of séns- | ual mént- | al pów’rs | ascénds’;

and in this actual form Pope sometimes, Dryden less frequently, uses it. This is the line of five accents, and Milton sparingly employs it in this precise form, which even the ‘correctest’ poets vary by using a trochee (accented followed by unaccented) after a pause (especially at the *beginning* of each line) and elsewhere. But a large number of Milton’s lines contain no more than four accents, and many of them only three, and by combining these, shifting the position of the pause in the line, and employing every variety of cadence, he has produced an epic metre surpassed perhaps by none. Take for a very brief example of his art such lines as these:—

‘Would thou’ hadst hearkened to my views, and stayed
With me, as I besought thee, when that strange
Desire of wandering, this unhappy morn,
I know not whence, possessed thee! We had then
Remained still happy—not, as now, despoiled
Of all our good, shamed, naked, miserable!
Let none henceforth seek needless cause to approve
The faith they owe; when earnestly they seek
Such proof, conclude they soon begin to fail.’

P. L., ix. 1134-1143.

In the above nine lines the reader will observe that there are two with three accents (in line 4, however, possibly the

word *know* may have an accent), three with four accents, and four with five. Of these, line 7 is the only one which can be said to consist of five iambs, and there it is rather doubtful whether *henceforth* should be read 'henceforth,' or 'henceforth.' Every line, it will be noted, 'overflows' except line 6. This line, it will be observed, has five accented syllables, three of which come together. Of course it is open to any one to read it:—

'Of all | our good | shamed, ná- | ked, mis | 'rable,'

but if we read Milton like this the harmony and melody of his verse are far to seek. Words like 'to approve' in line 7 and 'miserable' in line 6 are sometimes written for metrical purposes 't' approve,' 'mis'rable'; but it seems quite possible to preserve the rhythm of the lines without eliding the vowels. It is, however, to be remarked that Milton scarcely ever makes use of an extra syllable at the end of a line in 'Paradise Lost'; this liberty, which is frequently indulged in by the dramatists, and by Milton in his earlier poems, is used to a limited extent in 'Paradise Regained,' e.g. :—

'As thou to thy reproach may'st well remem- | ber.'—*P. R.*, iii.

We come now to his last poem, the death of the blind champion in slavery.

'In the modelling of this poem, with good reason, the ancients and Italians are rather followed, as of much more authority and fame. The measure of verse used in the Chorus is of all sorts, called by the Greeks *Monostrophio*, or rather *Apolytmenon*, without regard had to Strophe, Antistrophe, or Epode, which were a kind of stanzas framed only for the music, then used with the Chorus that sung; not essential to the poem, and therefore not material; or, being divided into stanzas or pauses, they may be called *Allæostrophæ*. Division into act and scene, referring chiefly to the stage (for which this work was never intended), is here omitted.'

This is an extract from Milton's preface to 'Samson Agonistes,' wherein he justifies his composing 'that sort of dramatic poem called tragedy,' 'the gravest, moralest, and most profitable of all poems'; therefore said by Aristotle to be of power, by raising pity and fear, or terror, to purge the mind of those and such-like passions—that is, to temper and reduce them to just measure with a kind of delight,

stirred up by reading or seeing those passions well imitated. That Milton had no feeling against stage-plays, as such, is evident from his praise of 'the well-trod stage' ('L'Allegro'), his noble verses on Shakespeare, and his early masques, 'Arcades' and 'Comus.' As we have seen, he had even planned a drama on the subject of 'Paradise Lost' before he gave it its epic form; and it is highly probable that he would have written more frequently in the dramatic form but for the fact that Puritan public opinion was altogether opposed to the stage, so that theatres were shut by order of Parliament (from 1642-60). Milton, in the preface from which we have quoted above, finds it necessary to quote the authority of St. Paul and of Gregory Nazianzen 'to vindicate tragedy from the small esteem, or rather infamy, which in the account of many it undergoes at this day, with other common interludes; happening through the poet's error of intermixing comic stuff with tragic sadness and gravity, or introducing trivial and vulgar persons; which by all judicious hath been counted absurd, and brought in without discretion, corruptly to gratify the people.'¹ Milton has no intention corruptly to gratify the people by the production of an entertaining sensational play; he has sought to 'justify the ways of God to man,' he says in 'Paradise Lost,' and he seeks to perform the same task in his dramatic poem. It is scarcely necessary to point out how in many ways he has identified himself with Samson Agonistes (the Struggler); the strong personal feelings which constantly break forth in his epics pervade the whole of his drama. Like Samson, he is wrecked by the falseness of woman—blind, helpless, among the Philistines. Looking back in his forsaken old age on his chaste, pious youth, and the stormy contests amid which his manhood had been passed, he might well say, like Samson,

'I was his nursling once, and choice delight,
His destined from the womb,
Promised by heavenly message twice descending.
Under his special eye
Abstemious I grew up and thrived amain;
He led me on to mightiest deeds,

¹ The date of his writing thus is 1668, or one of the two years following.

Above the nerve of mortal arm;
 Against the uncircumcised, our enemies,
 But now hath cast me off as never known,
 And to those cruel enemies,
 Whom I by his appointment had provoked,
 Left me all helpless, with the irreparable loss
 Of sight—reserved alive to be repented
 The subject of their cruelty or scorn.
 Nor am I in the list of them that hope;
 Hopeless are all my evils, all remediless;
 This one prayer yet remains, might I be heard,
 No long petition—speedy death,
 The close of all my miseries and the balm.'

The despairing mood is, however, not the prevalent one, for the poem is the glorification of the Almighty, who, after duly punishing His disobedient creature, makes him the instrument of the downfall of the foes of Samson's race, and the means of its deliverance. 'The circumscription of time, wherein the whole drama begins and ends, is, according to ancient rule and best example, within the space of twenty-four hours,'¹ and the action passes rapidly before our eyes. We see Samson first led out to rest awhile during the festivity of the Philistines in honour of Dagon: his countrymen (the Chorus) come to visit him and endeavour to console him; Manoah, too, his father, is there seeking to ransom him; there are two episodes, viz., the dialogue between Samson and his false wife Dalila, and that between him and the giant Harapha; then, when his 'giantship is gone, somewhat crestfallen,' an officer of the Philistines comes to bid him make sport in the temple. Samson at first refuses to go, but presently, feeling the inspiration of God within him, complies. The catastrophe is told to the Chorus and Manoah, who hear the crash of the falling temple, by an Israelite who witnessed it. 'Samson hath quit himself,' Manoah bursts forth exultantly,

'Like Samson, and heroically hath finished
 A life heroic—on his enemies
 Fully revenged. . . .
 Nothing is here for tears, nothing to wail
 Or knock the breast; no weakness, no contempt,

¹ Preface to 'Samson Agonistes,' where Milton makes it plain that he has modelled his poem by the examples of *Æschylus*, *Sophocles*, and *Euripides*.

Dispraise or blame; nothing but well and fair,
And what may quiet us in a death so noble.'

Milton has allowed us to catch glimpses of his soul, to form some mental conception of his vast powers in all his works; into this poem, written at the close of his life, he seems literally to have projected *himself*. Here are the last strains of his noble music, in which is summèd up the Miltonic belief; it is put into the mouth of Samson's faithful friends:—

'All is best, though we oft doubt
What the unsearchable dispose
Of Highest Wisdom brings about,
And ever best found in the close.
Oft He seems to hide His face,
But unexpectedly returns,
And to His faithful champion hath in place
Bore witness gloriously; whence Gaza mourns,
And all that band them to resist
His uncontrollable intent;
His servants He with new acquit
Of true experience, from this great event,
With peace and consolation hath dismissed,
And calm of mind—all passion spent.'

CHAPTER XIX.

THE PROSE (1580—1625): HOOKER, BACON, RALEIGH, ETC.

HOOKER was born at Heavitree, in Devonshire, and received his early education at the Exeter Grammar School. Richard Hooker, (1553¹-1600). His parents were in poor circumstances; but the help of a more prosperous relative, and the friendship of Bishop Jewel, enabled the young Hooker to go to Corpus Christi College, Oxford. A diligent student at the University, he was rewarded by a fellowship in 1577, and took holy orders four years later. After holding a living in Buckinghamshire for a short time, he was appointed to the Mastership of the Temple, obtaining this preferment through the good offices of Archbishop Sandys and Bishop Whitgift. His fellow-competitor for the mastership, Travers, was an ardent Puritan, while Hooker was a staunch supporter of the Church of England as by law established. Travers, though unsuccessful in his effort, remained in his post as afternoon-lecturer at the Temple, and preached Calvinistic doctrines: Hooker, in his discourses, combated these views. 'The pulpit,' wrote Fuller, 'spoke pure *Canterbury* in the morning, and *Geneva* in the afternoon.' As one consequence of these differences of views, Hooker was charged by Travers with heresy, a charge to which Hooker replied. Moreover, he determined to undertake a general investigation and a systematic exposition of the fundamental principles on which the constitution of the Church is based. To obtain proper leisure for his studies, he sought a quiet country rectory in place of his disputatious London post. The living of Boscombe, in Wiltshire,

¹ Or 1554.

was bestowed on him; and there he wrote the first four books of his great work, 'The Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity.' He was subsequently transferred to the wealthier parish of Bishopsbourne, near Canterbury, where he died in 1600. From his 'Life,' as written by Walton, it seems that he was much 'henpecked' by the shrewish and uninteresting wife whom he married soon after taking orders.

'The Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity' was planned to consist of eight books; these, according to his scheme of 'Things handled in the Books,' treat: (I.) Of Laws in General; (II.) Of the Use of Divine Law contained in Scripture: whether that is the only law which ought to serve for our direction in all things without exception; (III.) Of Laws concerning Ecclesiastical Polity: whether the form thereof be in Scripture so set down that no addition or change is lawful; (IV.) Of general exceptions taken against the Laws of our Polity, as being Popish, and banished out of certain Reformed Churches. Book V. deals with 'the Public Religious Duties of the Church,' and the manners of performing them. Book VI. should have discussed 'the Power of Jurisdiction which the reformed platform claimeth unto Lay Elders.' Book VII. sets forth the Benefits of Episcopacy; and VIII. enters into the relations between Church and State. The first four books were published about 1593, and the fifth appeared in 1597: The remaining three were not issued in their author's lifetime, and doubts exist as to their genuineness: it is thought that Books VII. and VIII. were manufactured or pieced together from notes made by Hooker for the great work, in which Book VI. (as we have it) appears to be entirely out of place. In the first book Hooker thus sets forth the motives that urge him to his task:—

'The Laws of the Church, whereby for so many ages together we have been guided in the exercise of Christian religion, and the service of the true God, our rites, customs, and orders of ecclesiastical government, are called in question: we are accused as men that will not have Christ Jesus to rule over them, but have wilfully cast his statutes behind their backs, hating to be reformed and made subject unto the sceptre of his discipline. Behold, therefore, we offer the laws whereby we live unto the general trial and judgment of the whole world; heartily beseeching Almighty God, whom we desire

to serve according to his own will, that both we and others (all kind of partial affection being clean laid aside) may have eyes to see and hearts to embrace the things that in his sight are most acceptable.

'And because the point about which we strive is the quality of our laws, our first entrance hereinto cannot better be made, than with consideration of the nature of law in general, and of that law which giveth life unto all the rest, which are commendable, just and good ; namely, the law whereby the Eternal himself doth work. Proceeding from hence to the law, first of Nature, then of Scripture, we shall have the easier access unto those things which come after to be debated, concerning the particular cause and question which we have in hand.'

Hooker's place as a stylist is generally regarded as a very exalted one. 'The great treatise,' says Mr. Lee, 'first proved the capacity of English prose for treating severe topics with a force and beauty which the great classical models rarely excelled. Hooker's style is based on Latin models, and is often cumbrous and stiff; but it never lacks solidity or dignity. He was a thorough logician in the arrangement of his sentences, always giving the emphatic word the emphatic place, even at the cost of intricacies of construction; and was keenly sensitive to the harmonious sequence of words. "His style," says Fuller, "was long and pithy, driving on a whole flock of clauses before he comes to the close of a sentence"; but, although he demands his reader's full attention, he is not unduly prolix, and exhorts, by his own intellectual cogency, his reader's acquiescence in his conclusions. In his own day the grandeur of his literary style excited the sneers of his enemies, who charged him with sacrificing religious fervour to culture and philosophy. Swift asserts that Hooker . . . had written so naturally that his English had survived all changes of fashion. In Hallam's phrase, "Hooker not only opened the mine, but explored the depths, of our native eloquence." From a literary point of view, Hooker must be ranked with Bacon.'

Francis Bacon was the son of Sir Nicholas, the Lord Keeper of the Privy Seal. After his education at Cambridge, and a sojourn on the Continent, he turned to the law, and was called to the Bar in 1582. Two years later he entered Parliament, and began at

Francis
Bacon
(1561-1620).

once to play a prominent part in affairs. At Elizabeth's court he had powerful enemies, as well as some friends; and he received no office from the Queen, save the reversion of a post which did not fall vacant for many years. He was, however, one of the counsel chosen to conduct the impeachment of Essex, and has been much blamed for the warmth with which he attacked his benefactor. After the accession of James I., he became in turn Solicitor-General, Attorney-General, and Lord Chancellor, being dismissed from the last dignity, in 1621, on the ground of corruption.¹

Of Bacon's works, the larger (but perhaps not the most important) part is written in Latin; for he was firmly impregnated with the belief of the more enduring value of the classical tongues, as compared with modern idioms. His first published work, however, was an English 'Advertisement touching the Controversies of the Church of England.' In English, too, are written the famous 'Essays,' of which the first ten were published in 1597, being followed by some thirty more in 1612, and completed (the whole number being now fifty-eight) in the year before his death. It is to these Essays that he owes his commanding position in our literature—a position, however, which would have been high had it only been due to his other works in English, the chief of which are: the 'Advancement of Learning' (1605), the 'History of the Reign of Henry VII.' (1622), 'Sylva Sylvarum' (published posthumously), and a fragmentary 'New Atlantis.'

His chief Latin work—and that on which his fame as a philosopher mainly rests—is the 'Novum Organum.' This and the 'Advancement of Learning' (translated by its author, and much enlarged as 'De Augmentis Scientiarum') were to form parts of the 'Instauratio Magna,' a great project never completed. 'De Augmentis,' with its survey of the state of learning, was to be the first section. Next should follow the 'Novum Organum,' showing the way in which new truths could be discovered, the mode advocated being what is now known as the inductive method—urging

¹ It may be well to point out to the student that, though he is generally known as 'Lord Bacon,' that designation is incorrect. He was Sir Francis Bacon, then Baron Verulam, and finally Viscount St. Albans.

the necessity of going 'from particular things to those which are but one step more general, from those to others of still greater extent, and so on to such as are universal.' Other sections were to comprise: (iii.) '*Phænomena Universi*,' a history of Nature, of which '*Sylva Sylvarum*' is a specimen; (iv.) '*Scala Intellectus*,' the ladder of the intellect, or specimens of the application of the new organ; (v.) '*Prodromi*,' the forerunners of the new philosophy, an account of results arrived at without the aid of the new organ; and (vi.) '*Philosophia Secunda, or Active Science*,' of which no fragment seems to have been written. It was to contain 'the result of the application of the new philosophy to all the phenomena of the universe.'

The following extract from the Essays ('Of Expense') is an illustration of the close-packed, clear, half-epigrammatic style in which Bacon clothes his acute worldly wisdom:—

'Riches are for spending, and spending for honour and good actions, therefore extraordinary expense must be limited by the worth of the occasion; for voluntary undoing may be as well for a man's country as for the kingdom of heaven. But ordinary expense ought to be limited by a man's estate, and governed with such regard as it be within his compass, and not subject to deceit and abuse of servants, and ordered to the best show, that the bills may be less than the estimation abroad. Certainly if a man will keep but of even hand, his ordinary expenses ought to be but to the half of his receipts; and if he think to wax rich, but to the third part. It is no baseness for the greatest to descend and look into their own estate. Some forbear it, not upon negligence alone, but doubting to bring themselves into melancholy, in respect they shall find it broken. But wounds cannot be cured without searching. He that cannot look into his own estate at all had need both choose well them whom he employeth, and change them often, for new are more timorous and less subtle. He that can look into his estate but seldom, it behoveth him to turn all to certainties. A man had need, if he be plentiful in some kind of expense, to be as saving again in some other: as if he be plentiful in diet, to be saving in apparel; if he be plentiful in the hall, to be saving in the stable, and the like. For he that is plentiful in expenses of all kinds will hardly be preserved from decay. . . .'

'It is characteristic of Bacon's philosophical writings,' says Hallam, 'that they have in them a spirit of movement, a perpetual reference to what man is to do in order to an end, rather than to his mere speculation upon what is.'

In his *Essays* this is naturally still more prominent. They are, as quaintly described in the title-page of the first edition, "places (*loci*) of persuasion and dissuasion"; counsels for those who would be great as well as wise. They are such as sprang from a mind ardent in two kinds of ambition, and hesitating whether to found a new philosophy or to direct the vessel of the state. We perceive, however, that the immediate reward attending greatness, as is almost always the case, gave it a preponderance in his mind; and, hence, his *Essays* are more often political than moral: they deal with mankind, not in their general faculties or habits, but in their mutual strife, their endeavours to rule others or to avoid their rule. . . . The transcendent strength of his mind is visible in the whole tenor of these *Essays*, unequal as they must be from the very nature of such compositions. They are deeper and more discriminating than any earlier, or almost any later, work in the English language, full of recondite observation, long matured and carefully sifted. It is true that we might wish for more vivacity and ease. Bacon, who had much wit, had little gaiety; his *Essays* are consequently stiff and grave, where the subject might have been touched with a lively hand. . . . The sentences have sometimes too apophthegmatic a form, and want coherence; the historical instances, though far less frequent than with Montaigne, have a little the look of pedantry to our eyes. But it is from this condensation, from this gravity, that the work derives its peculiar impressiveness. Few books . . . are more generally read: . . . few in our language so well repay the pains, or afford more nourishment to the thoughts.'

There is undoubtedly no Elizabethan writer who can claim to stand beside Bacon and Hooker as their peer in prose; yet one at least is, when at his best, as fine a writer as either of them. This is Raleigh, whose writings are extremely unequal, being on the whole rather dull and flat, but lit up, ever and anon, by glowing bursts of eloquence. There are verses extant of his which entitle him to mention among the poets, especially if we rightly ascribe to him 'The Lie,' in which the soul is bidden to go 'upon a thankless errand,' and—

Sir Walter
Raleigh
(1552-1618).

‘Say to the Court, it glows
And shines like rotten wood;
Say to the Church, it shows
What’s good and doth no good:
If Court and Church reply,
Then give them both the lie.

‘Tell men of high condition
That manage the Estate,
Their purpose is ambition,
Their practice only hate:
And if they once reply,
Then give them all the lie.’

In other verse—*e.g.*, the dainty mocking reply to Marlowe’s ‘Passionate Shepherd,’ the Fairy Queen Sonnet, etc.—he shows high gifts, and he has his niche in literary history as Spenser’s ‘Shepherd of the Ocean.’ In his unfinished ‘History of the World,’ a work planned on too large a scale for any one man to execute, there are specimens (especially in the preface and towards the end) of singular eloquence, such as the following:—

‘If we seek a reason of the succession and continuance of this boundless ambition in mortal men, we may add to that which hath already been said, that the Kings and Princes of the world have always laid before them the actions, but not the ends, of those great ones which preceded them. They are always transported with the glory of the one, but they never mind the glory of the other, till they find the experience in themselves. They neglect the advice of God, while they enjoy life, or hope it; but they follow the counsel of Death upon his first approach. It is he that puts into man all the wisdom of the world, without speaking a word; which God with all the words of his Law, promises, or threats, doth infuse—Death, which hateth and destroyeth man, is believed; God, which hath made him, and loves him, is always deferred. “I have considered,” saith Solomon, “all the works that are under the Sun, and behold all is vanity and vexation of spirit”: but who believes it, till Death tells it us? It was Death which, opening the conscience of Charles V., made him enjoin his son Philip to restore Navarre; and King Francis the First of France command that justice should be done upon the murderers of the Protestants in Merindol and Cabrieres, which till then he neglected. It is, therefore, Death alone that can suddenly make man to know himself. He tells the proud and insolent that they are but abjects, and humbles them at the instant; makes them cry, complain, and repent, yea, even to hate their forepassed happiness. He takes the account of the rich, and proves him a beggar; a naked beggar, which hath interest in

nothing, but in the gravel that fills his mouth. He holds a glass before the eyes of the most beautiful, and makes them see herein, their deformity and rottenness; and they acknowledge it.

'O eloquent, just and mighty Death! whom none could advise, thou hast persuaded; what none hath dared, thou hast done; and whom all the world hath flattered, thou only hast cast out of the world and despised: thou hast drawn together all the far-fetched greatness, all the pride, cruelty, and ambition of man, and covered it all over with these two narrow words,—*Hic jacet.*'

When Raleigh wrote this he was in prison, into which he had been cast soon after the accession of James I., on the charge of complicity in Lord Cobham's plot. His adventurous life terminated on the scaffold in 1618, on his return from an unsuccessful search for a gold mine. More than twenty years before, he had ascertained, he thought, where El Dorado lay, when he first found 'the Large, Beautiful, and Rich Empire of Guiana,' as he called it in the account he wrote of his 'Discovery.'

Other Elizabethan sailors wrote accounts of their voyages, for there was much interest in description of strange lands and new routes in these days. The most famous work of this nature, however, is the collection of a clergyman—Richard Hakluyt, who died as Prebendary of Westminster in 1616. Hakluyt published 'Divers Voyages Touching the Discovery of America,' in 1582, which he followed seven years later by the first instalment of his chief work, 'The Principal Navigations, Voyages, and Discoveries of the English Nation,' etc. Some of Hakluyt's MS. came into the possession of the Rev. Samuel Purchas (d. 1626), who published four volumes of a work entitled, 'Purchas, his Pilgrims, or Relations of the World in Sea Voyages,' etc. (1613-25), as well as a 'History of Man,' and 'An Account of the Religions of the World.'

Patriotism impelled John Stowe, a London tailor, to the loving, if uncritical, study of England's past, which produced his 'Annales; or, a General Chronicle of England.' This work was first published in 1580, and was revised and 'augmented' by Howes in 1615. An earlier work of Stowe's is his 'Summary of English Chronicles' (1561), and a more famous one his much-cited 'Survey of London' (1598), to which

Voyages:
Hakluyt,
Purchas.

Historians,
etc.

John Stowe
(d. 1605).

many later accounts of the Metropolis are indebted.

Another tailor-historian is John Speed, who is praised for showing an unusual amount of discriminating scepticism in his 'History of Great Britain under the Romans,' etc., which was published in 1611. Speed also issued collections of maps and genealogies.

John Speed
(d. 1629).

'The Lives of Three Norman Kings of England' was the title of a book by Sir John Hayward, who also wrote a 'Complete History of Edward IV.,' and an account of 'Certain Years of Queen Elizabeth's Reign' (both published posthumously), as well as a treatise

Sir John
Hayward
(d. 1627).

'Of Supremacy in Religious Matter.' More famous as a writer than any of these is Knolles, the author of the 'History of the Turks,' whom both Johnson and Hallam highly commend. Among the

Richard
Knolles
(d. 1610).

historians, too, we must reckon Bacon, Raleigh, and Daniel, whose works in this department have already been touched on. A labourer in

Bacon,
Raleigh,
Daniel.

a cognate subject is the learned headmaster of Westminster, William Camden, whose chief work is his 'Britannia,' a description (written in Latin) of the British Isles. He wrote a good many other works, including some Latin 'Annals' of Elizabethan affairs.

The first important work of Elizabethan prose (if we except 'The Schoolmaster') is a novel: this is Lyly's 'Euphues' which we have already surveyed, as we have also the 'Arcadia' of Sidney, and the tales of Greene, Lodge, and other writers of fiction (see ch. xiii. and p. 272).

With the fierce dissensions of 'Churchmen' and 'Puritans' is connected a multitude of writings of all kinds, which includes Bacon's 'Advertisement touching the Controversies of the Church of England,' and Hooker's 'Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity,' as well as the less valuable pamphlets of and against 'Martin Marprelate.' This was the pseudonym adopted by the author or authors of the most virulent attacks upon the episcopacy. The chief tracts bearing this signature have been imputed to Udall, Penry, and others; but the matter is surrounded

Elizabethan
Novels.

The 'Martin
Marprelate'
Literature.

with doubt. 'The Epistle,' one of the attacks that excited most notice, which appeared in 1588, was answered by Thomas Cooper, Bishop of London, in an 'Admonition to the People of England,' and this brought forth from the other side a retort entitled, 'Hay (i.e. Have ye) any Work for the Cooper?' Champions of the Church party stepped forth to show the Martinists that coarseness, scurrilous invective, and unfairness, were not the exclusive property of the Puritans, and attacks and counter-attacks multiplied rapidly. Lyly is thought by some to be the author of the anti-Martinist 'Pap with a Hatchet,' and 'An Almond for a Parrot.' The latter and several others have also been attributed to Nash.

Probably the first attempt at a critical examination of the form of our poetry is to be found in the
 Criticism. 'Notes of Instruction concerning the Making of Verse or Rhyme in English,' by George Gascoigne (p. 164); we have also seen Gabriel Harvey, Spenser, and their friends, corresponding about the new method of versifying and related subjects. The first real contribution to our literature of criticism—and the only valuable one during this age—is Sidney's 'Defence of Poetry,' of which we have
 Sidney. spoken in connection with his poems. Of other and much less important works on the subject, we may mention William Webbe's 'Discourse of English Poetry,' published in 1586, and an 'Art of English Poesie,'
 Webbe, Puttenham. which appeared in 1589, and is attributed to George Puttenham: the former was the work of an advocate of the new versifying, and a despiser of rhyme; the latter is mainly now interesting on account of the opinions of the value of English poetry contained in it. The poets Campion and Daniel have also left writings on
 Campion, Daniel. their art,—the former in another 'Art of English Poesie,' in which he too showed his estimation of the 'classical' metres, which was answered in Daniel's 'Apology for Rhyme.' The best known work of Francis
 Meres. Meres—familiar to 'every schoolboy,' for its reference to Shakespeare—is his 'Palladis Tamia, or Wit's Treasury' (1598), which, though mainly a compilation of quotations from the ancients, is interesting in

this connection for the essay on English authors compared with the classics and Italians which is prefixed to it.

This compilation of Meres is entitled the 'Second Part of Wit's Commonwealth,' the original 'Wit's ^{Miscellaneous} Commonwealth' or 'Politeuphia'—a similar collection of prose sentences—having been compiled by John Bodenham, the editor of 'England's Helicon' (see p. 278).

^{Bodenham,} Philip Stubbes, the writer of a considerable ^{Stubbes.} amount of prose, is faintly remembered for a satirical description of an island called 'Ailgna' (*i.e.* England) in his 'Anatomy of Abuses' (1583). John Florio's

^{Florio's} translation of Montaigne's 'Essays' (1603) was ^{Montaigne.} probably familiar to the author of 'The Tempest'; these had first appeared in 1580, and some think Bacon slightly indebted to them. Essays of a different

^{Overbury.} sort are the 'Characters or Witty Descriptions of the Properties of Sundry Persons,' written by Sir Thomas Overbury, and published in the year following his murder in 1613.

Finally we come to what is in every way, whether judged by its style or influence, the greatest ^{The} monument of the prose of the age, though of it ^{'Authorised Version.'} we need say but little here—the translation of the Scriptures which was made by a company of divines under the King's authority and published in 1611. They took as the basis of their labours the then official version known as 'The Bishop's Bible' and made in 1568 under the superintendence of Archbishop Parker, which itself partly followed earlier versions. A consequence of this adhering to older translations appears in the archaic character of the language—which is, as Hallam says, 'not the English of Daniel, or Raleigh, or Bacon, as any one may easily perceive, but an idiom compounded of that of the time, and of that of the preceding century'; moreover, says Mr. Saintsbury, 'the style and structure of the originals, and earlier versions . . . served as safeguards against the besetting sin of all prose-writers of their time,—the habit of indulging in long wandering sentences, in paragraphs destitute of proportion and of grace, destitute even of ordinary manageableness and shape. The verses

saved them from that once and for all; while on the other hand their own taste, and the help given by the structure of the original in some cases, prevented them from . . . omitting to consider the relation of verse to verse, as well as the antiphony of the clauses within the verse. Men without literary faculty might no doubt have gone wrong; but these were men of great literary faculty, whose chief liabilities to error were guarded against precisely by the very condition in which they found their work.'

CHAPTER XX.

THE PROSE (1625—1660¹): TAYLOR—BROWNE—FULLER —
HOBBES—MINOR WRITERS.

THE greatest prose writer of the age is the eloquent divine who towards the close of his life became Bishop of Down, and afterwards of Dromore. Born of humble parents (his father was a barber) at Cambridge, he was admitted into holy orders, after education at the Perse School and Caius College there and gained the favourable notice of Archbishop Laud by a sermon preached before him; through his influence he obtained a fellowship at All Souls', Oxford, in 1636, and was appointed two years later to the rectory of Uppingham, of which, however, he was deprived soon after the outbreak of the Civil War. During the triumph of the Parliamentary party he lived in retirement, and more than once underwent imprisonment; it was during this time that the bulk of his work was written. Shortly before the Restoration he received a small preferment in Ireland, and subsequently the advancement mentioned above.

Among the chief of Taylor's numerous writings are 'Holy Living' and 'Holy Dying,' 'The Great Exemplar,' 'The Golden Grove,' and 'Ductor Dubitantium,' which were all written between 1645 and 1660. His earliest publication however was 'Episcopacy Asserted,' which appeared in 1643. In all his work the most striking literary qualities are the musical cadence of the sentences, wealth of illustration and brilliant imagery, and beautiful pathos. His sentences are often long, as is the case with all the writers of this age who produce harmonious rhetorical periods, occasionally unwieldy after the fashion of the time, sometimes ungrammatical in structure. It is, as Heber says,

¹ For Milton, see chap. xviii.

'on devotional and moral subjects that the peculiar character of his mind is most, and most successfully, developed. To this service he devotes his most glowing language; to this his aptest illustrations: his thoughts and his words at once burst into a flame when touched by the coals of this altar; and whether he describes the duties, or dangers, or hopes of man, or the mercy, power, and justice of the Most High; whether he exhorts or instructs his brethren, or offers up his supplications in their behalf to the common Father of all, his conceptions and his expressions belong to the loftiest and most sacred poetry, of which they only want . . . the name and the metrical arrangement. It is this distinctive excellence, still more than the other qualifications of learning and logical acuteness, which has placed him, even in that age of gigantic talent, on an eminence superior to any of his immediate contemporaries, . . . and has seated him, by the almost unanimous estimate of posterity, on the same lofty elevation with Hooker.'¹ The following excerpt (from 'Holy Dying') may give an idea of his style:—

'Truth is there are but two great periods in which faith demonstrates itself to be a powerful and mighty grace; and they are persecution and the approaches of death, for the passive part; and a temptation, for the active. In the day of pleasure and the night of pain, faith is to fight her *agonisticon*, to contend for mastery; and faith overcomes all alluring and fond temptations to sin, and faith overcomes all our weaknesses and faintings in our troubles. By the faith of the promises we learn to despise the world, choosing those objects which faith discovers; and by expectation of the same promises we are comforted in all our sorrows, and enabled to look through and see beyond the cloud: but the vigour of it is pressed and called forth when all our fine discourses come to be reduced to practice. For in our health and clearer days it is easy to talk of putting trust in God: we readily trust Him for life when we are in health; for provisions, when we have fair revenues; and for deliverance, when we are newly escaped: but let us come to sit upon the margin of our grave, and

¹ 'And with Barrow,' adds Heber, though from a purely literary point of view probably very few would admit Barrow's right to be mentioned with Taylor. 'Of such a triumvirate,' he continues, 'who shall settle the precedence? Yet it may perhaps be not far from the truth to observe that Hooker claims the foremost rank in sustained and classic dignity of style, in political and pragmatical wisdom: that to Barrow the praise must be assigned of the closest and clearest views, and of a taste the most controlled and chastened; but that in imagination, in interest, in that which most properly and exclusively deserves the name of genius, Taylor is to be placed before either. The first awes most, the second convinces most, the third persuades and delights most. Hooker is the object of our reverence, Barrow of our admiration, and Jeremy Taylor of our love.'

let a tyrant lean hard upon our fortunes and dwell upon our wrong ; let the storm arise, and the keels toss till the cordage crack, or that all our hopes bulge under us and descend into the hollowness of sad misfortunes ; then can you believe, when you neither hear, nor see, nor feel anything but objections ? This is the proper work of sickness ; faith is then brought into the theatre, and so exercised that if it abides but to the end of the contention we may see the work of faith which God will largely crown. . . . It was the fire that did honour to Mutius Scaevola, poverty made Fabricius famous, Rutilius was made excellent by banishment, Regulus by torments, Socrates by prison, Cato by his death ; and God hath crowned the memory of Job with a wreath of glory because he sat upon his dunghill wisely and temperately, and his potsherd and his groans mingled with praises and justifications of God pleased Him like an anthem sung by angels in the morning of the Resurrection.'

Of other theological writers whose works fall within this period one of the most important is Chillingworth, whose chief work—besides some eloquent sermons —is 'The Religion of Protestants a Safe Way to Salvation' (1637), written in answer to the work of a Jesuit, Knott. 'His chief excellence,' says Hallam, 'is the close reasoning which avoids every dangerous admission, and yields to no ambiguousness of language. He perceived and maintained with great courage (considering the times in which he wrote, and the temper of those whom he was not unwilling to keep as friends) his favourite tenet, that all things necessary to be believed are clearly laid down in Scripture.' He is a strenuous supporter of toleration, and a foe to that 'deifying our own interpretations and tyrannous enforcing them upon others' which, along with the 'restraining of the word of God from that latitude and generality, and the understandings of men from that liberality wherein Christ and the apostles left them, is and hath been the only fountain of all the schism of the church.' His friend Hales (1584-1656), 'the ever-memorable,' declaims even more emphatically in his tract on 'Schism' (1628) against the setting up of church authority as absolute ; his 'Golden Remains' were collected and published in 1659. James Usher (1580-1656), Archbishop of Armagh, a voluminous writer whose theological views made him a supporter of Divine right, is best known as antiquarian and

Theologians.

William
Chilling-
worth,
1602-1644.

John Hales.

Archbishop
Usher.

historian, his chief works being his 'Annals of the Old and New Testament,' 'Chronologia Sacra,' and 'Britannicarum Ecclesiarum Antiquitates et Primordia,' all in Latin.

The writings of William Sancroft (1616-1693), Archbishop of Canterbury, are some 'Sermons.'

An interesting pamphlet, a 'very bold and unambiguous attack on the Calvinistic system,' is the Latin 'Fur Praedestinatus,' an anonymous dialogue generally ascribed to Sancroft, but translated, it appears, from the Dutch. The 'Exposition of the Apostles' Creed' (1659) by John Pearson (1612-1686), Bishop of Chester, is remarkable for learning and sense,

and 'is a standard book in English divinity.' Pearson succeeded in the See of Chester the ingenious Dr. John Wilkins (1614-1672), who left behind him an unfinished work on the 'Principles and Duties of Natural Religion,' and is remembered for his attempt, in 'A Discovery of a New World' (1638), to show that the moon may be inhabited, and might possibly be reached, as well as for his support of the new theory (1640) that 'our earth is one of the planets,' and for his 'Essay towards . . . a Philosophical Language.' We conclude the list of these Church of England divines with a mention of Robert Sanderson (1587-1663), Bishop of Lincoln,

who, besides Latin writings ('De Obligatione Juramenti,' etc.) and sermons, wrote 'Nine Cases of Conscience Resolved'; Hallam calls him 'the most celebrated of English casuists.' Of the non-conforming writers the chief is Baxter, who after taking Anglican orders found himself forced by conscience to side with the Parliamentarians; of the vast number of books which he wrote the chief are 'The Saint's Everlasting Rest' (1650), and 'A Call to the Unconverted' (1657).

'The novelty of paradoxes, the dignity of sentiment, the quick succession of images, the multitude of abstruse allusions, the subtlety of disquisitions, and the strength of language,' are the causes which Johnson enumerates as having attracted the attention of the public to the appearance of the 'Religio Medici.' Browne, its author, was the son of a London merchant; after education

Sir Thomas Browne, 1605-1682.

at Winchester and Oxford, he continued his studies on the Continent, and returned to England with the title of doctor of medicine, which he obtained at Leyden. His 'Religio Medici,' as the following extract shows, was written about 1635, and a MS. copy was sent to the printers without his permission in 1642, being followed by the authorised edition in the next year. The book was at once immensely popular not only at home, but also on the Continent, for it was promptly translated into Latin; it was the exposition of the tolerant, poetic Christianity of a student of science and a lover of harmony in nature, art, and life:—

'Now for my life, it is a miracle of thirty years, which to relate were not a history, but a piece of poetry, and would sound to common ears like a fable. For the world, I count it not an inn, but an hospital; and a place not to live, but to die in. The world that I regard is myself; it is the microcosm of my own frame that I cast mine eye on: for the other, I use it like a globe, and turn it round sometimes for my recreation. Men that look upon my outside, perusing only my condition and fortunes, do err in my altitude; for I am above Atlas's shoulders. The earth is a point not only in respect of the heavens above us, but of that heavenly and celestial part within us. That mass of flesh that circumscribes me limits not my mind. That surface that tells the heavens it hath an end cannot persuade me I have any. I take my circle to be above three hundred and sixty. Though the number of the airc do measure my body, it comprehendeth not my mind. Whilst I study to find how I am a microcosm, or little world, I find myself something more than the great. There is surely a piece of divinity in us; something that was before the elements, and owes no homage under the sun. Nature tells me I am the image of God, as well as Scripture. He that understands not thus much hath not his introduction or first lesson, and is yet to begin the alphabet of man.'

Browne settled as a medical practitioner at Norwich about 1637, and spent the remainder of his life there. In 1646 appeared his 'Pseudodoxia Epidemica; or, Enquiries into Vulgar Errors,' and twelve years later came 'his best-written work,' viz., 'Hydriotaphia; or, Urn-burial.' His other writings are not very important—'The Garden of Cyrus' (a fantastic learned treatise on the mystic imports of the quincunx and the number five), 1658, and a work on 'Christian Morals' published posthumously, with some other literary remains. His mind, says Hallam, 'was fertile, and,

according to the current use of the word, ingenious; his analogies are original, and sometimes brilliant. . . . His style is not flowing, but vigorous; his choice of words not elegant, and even approaching to barbarism as English phrase; yet there is an impressiveness, an air of reflection and sincerity in Browne's writings, which redeem many of their faults.' But Hallam's view of Browne's literary merits is far below that which has been entertained of them by many fine critics. While it is admitted that he uses Latinisms largely, or rather words coined by himself from Latin, he is generally praised for the almost constant high level of a style pervaded by lofty serenity and calm majesty, and expressed in rhythmical periods, to say nothing of his bursts of eloquence, or of the influence he has exercised over later writers.

Thomas Fuller, the son of a Northamptonshire clergyman, entered the Church in 1630, on completing his education at Cambridge. A little later he obtained a prebend in the diocese of Salisbury, and (in 1634) the living of Broadwindsor in Dorsetshire. Both these preferments he relinquished soon after the outbreak of the Civil War, and, coming to London, acted for a time as preacher to the Inns of Court, and then as curate of the Savoy (1641-3). A Royalist in sympathy, his cast of mind inclined him ever towards moderation, and he managed without servility or want of principle to keep on fairly good terms with both parties, though he had been fined £200 by the Long Parliament in 1640, and though his dislike to over-puritanism forced him to leave London for a time in 1643. He went to the King at Oxford, acted as chaplain to one of his generals, and was in the Royalist garrison that surrendered at Exeter in 1646. After the execution of the King, he found friends and patrons among the more moderate of the Parliamentarians, obtained some preferment, and continued to write diligently. At the Restoration he recovered his Salisbury prebend and his Savoy curacy, but did not live long to enjoy them, dying in 1661, his most famous work, 'The History of the Worthies of England,' being published in the year following.

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mentioned is now read by any but students. Besides some verse in no way remarkable, and many sermons,—he was one of the most popular preachers of his age,—there are a number of separate works by him in existence, of which 'The History of the Holy War' (1639), 'A Pisgah-Sight of Palestine' (1650), 'The Church History of Britain' (1655), and 'The Worthies' are the chief. 'The writings of Fuller,' says Lamb, 'are usually designated by the title of *quaint*, and with sufficient reason; for such was his natural bias to "conceits," that I doubt not upon most occasions it would have been going out of his way to have expressed himself out of them. But his art is not always a *lumen siccum*, a dry faculty of surprising; on the contrary, his conceits are oftentimes deeply steeped in human feeling and passion. Above all, his way of telling a story, for its eager liveliness, and the perpetual running commentary of the narrator happily blended with the narration, is perhaps unequalled.' Coleridge observes that 'Wit was the stuff and substance of Fuller's intellect, . . . the element, the earthen base, the material which he worked in, and this very circumstance has defrauded him of his due praise for the practical wisdom of the thoughts, for the beauty and variety of the truths, into which he shaped the stuff.'¹

We take a few short citations from the 'Worthies':—

'*Shakespeare*.—Add to all these, that though his genius generally was jocular, and inclining him to festivity, yet he could (when so disposed) be solemn and serious, as appears by his tragedies; so that Heraclitus himself (I mean if secret and unseen) might afford to smile at his comedies, they were so merry; and Democritus scarce forbear to sigh at his tragedies, they were so mournful.

'He was an eminent instance of the truth of that rule, *Poeta non fit sed nascitur* (one is not made but born a poet). Indeed his learning was very little; so that as Cornish diamonds are not polished by any lapidary, but are pointed and smoothed even as they are taken out of the earth, so Nature itself was all the art which was used upon him.

'Many were the wit-combats betwixt him and Ben Jonson; which two I behold like a Spanish great galleon and an English man-of-war:

¹ He adds: 'Fuller was incomparably the most sensible, the least prejudiced great man of an age that boasted a galaxy of great men. He is a very voluminous writer, and yet in all his numerous volumes, on so many different subjects, it is scarcely too much to say that you will hardly find a page in which some one sentence out of every three does not deserve to be quoted for itself—as motto or as maxim.'

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Master Jonson (like the former) was built far higher in learning; solid but slow in his performances. Shakespeare, with the English man-of-war, lesser in bulk but lighter in sailing, could turn with all tides, tack about, and take advantage of all winds by the quickness of his wit and invention.'

After Browne and Fuller we may perhaps best consider the works of certain writers of essays, of history, and of semi-philosophical and miscellaneous works, most of which are distinguished for erudition.

The work by which Earle is known is entitled '*Micro-John Earle, cosmographie*,' which is explained further as '*A 1621-1663. Piece of the World discovered in Essays and Characters*.' The book was published in 1628, fourteen years after the appearance of Sir Thomas Overbury's '*Characters*,' to which it owes its form, consisting as it does of sketches of typical representatives of various callings, classes of society, 'humours,' etc. 'Earle is always gay and quick to catch the ridiculous, especially that of exterior appearances,' says Hallam: 'his style is short, describing well with a few words, but with much of the affected quaintness of that age. It is one of those books which give us a picturesque idea of the manners of our fathers.'

Another book of essays of a different kind may also Feltham's '*Resolves*,' be mentioned here. This is the '*Resolves*' of 1627-8. Owon Feltham (*d.* 1677). In these, '*Divino, Moral, and Political*' difficulties are '*resolved*' [*i.e.*, explained] by the writer in a series of Baconian essays, with no grace of style, much pedantry, and little vigour. Hallam considers his popularity to have been due to the fact that 'the moral reflections of a serious and thoughtful mind are generally pleasing.' Like these two writers, Selden is mainly known John Selden, to English readers as the author of one book, and 1584-1654. that of the '*short-essay*' type. This is his '*Table Talk*,' which was edited after his death by his friend Milward, and consists of the acute scholar's pithy remarks on '*Various Matters of Weight and High Consequence*.' He was a learned lawyer, and deeply interested in tracing out the historical and philosophical development of law, his chief English writings being '*Titles of Honour*' (1614) and a '*History of Tithes*' (1618). In Latin he wrote a weighty work, '*De*

Jure Naturali juxta Disciplinam Hebræorum et Gentium, and on various other subjects. Selden is among the historians by one part of his work, and so is Lord Herbert of Cherbury (Edward Herbert) by his *'Life and Reign of King Henry VIII.'* (pub. 1649), which Hallam describes as 'a book of good authority, relatively at least to any that preceded, and written in a manly and judicious spirit.' His principal work, however, is a philosophical Latin *'De Veritate'* (1624), in which he endeavours to explore and expound the ways whereby Truth may be 'distinguished from Revelation, from Probability, and from Falsehood.' Some other writers of historical books may just be mentioned here: these are Sir Richard Baker, whose *'Chronicle of the Kings of England from the Earliest Days'* is practically the last of this species of history-writing, and Thomas May, the author of the *'Reign of King Henry the Second,'* *'The History of the Parliament which began Nov. 3rd, 1610,'* and other works. Sir William Dugdale (1605-1685), if his place in literature is small, claims notice from scholars as the author of *'Monasticon Anglicanum,'* *'The History of St. Paul's,'* and other antiquarian works. But leaving these and omitting the prose of Milton and Cowley, which is dealt with elsewhere, we go to the last great name on our list. Hobbes, after first touching on two minor writers, both of some importance, viz., Howell and Walton.

Howell, who wrote a large number of works of various kinds,—the list embraces grammar, verse, history, biography, allegorical fiction, 'instructions for foreign travel,' etc.,—is remembered for his letters, published as *'Epistolæ Ho-ellianæ'* (1645-55): he had travelled abroad, and seen much and reflected, and as he has a pleasant lively style these letters are entertaining reading.

Walton has written at least one book which seems to have taken a place in our literature as a minor classic: this is *'The Complete Angler; or, The Contemplative Man's Recreation,'* which appeared in 1653; 'its simplicity, its sweetness, its natural grace

and happy intermixture of graver strains with the precepts of angling, have rendered this book deservedly popular'; one feels after reading it a kind of personal affection for the gentle, 'contemplative' author. He also wrote 'Lives' of Donne, Wotton, Hooker, Herbert, and Sanderson (1640-78), which are interesting and valuable.

Hobbes, who was born in the year of the Armada, began to come before the public as a philosophical writer in the year 1647 with the Latin '*De Cive*,' which ^{Thomas Hobbes, 1588-1679.} had been circulated privately before, and was translated into English in 1650. In the last-mentioned year appeared his '*Treatise on Human Nature*' and '*De Corpore Politico*,' while in 1651 came '*Leviathan*; or, The Matter, Form, and Power of a Commonwealth, Ecclesiastical and Civil.' In this book, issued so short a time after the execution of Charles I., he boldly utters his views of the rights of kings and peoples in passages such as this, which we select (from Part II. of '*Leviathan*') as example of his style:—

'The sovereign's actions cannot be justly accused by the subject.— Fourthly, because every subject is by this institution author of all the actions and judgments of the sovereign instituted; it follows that whatsoever he doth, it can be no injury to any of his subjects; nor ought he to be by any of them accused of injustice. For he that doth anything by authority from another, doth therein no injury to him by whose authority he acted: but by this institution of a commonwealth, every particular man is author of all the sovereign doth: and consequently he that complaineth of injury from his sovereign, complaineth of that whereof he himself is author; and therefore ought not to accuse any man but himself; no, nor himself of injury; because to do injury to one's self is impossible. It is true that they that have sovereign power may commit iniquity; but not injustice, or injury in the proper signification.

'Whatever the sovereign doth is unpunishable by the subject.— Fifthly, and consequently to that which was said last, no man that hath sovereign power can justly be put to death, or otherwise in any manner by his subjects punished. For seeing every subject is author of the actions of his sovereign, he punisheth another for the actions committed by himself.'

The works of Hobbes, besides those already mentioned, include a treatise of '*Liberty and Necessity*' (1654) and '*De Corpore*,' which appeared in Latin in 1655, and in English next year; as well as a translation of Thucydides

in 1628, and a translation of Homer into English verse fifty years later, and 'Behemoth, a History of the Civil Wars,' published posthumously; he also left autobiographical Latin verses. He was born at Malmesbury, and, after leaving Oxford at the age of about twenty, travelled on the Continent with the heir of the Earl of Devonshire, with whose family he was closely connected from then till the end of his long life. He was a student his whole life through, and, as his works show, a loving reader of Greek, a practised writer in Latin, and a constant worker in philosophy and science, as befitted the friend of Ben Jonson, of Bacon, and of Galileo. His political views naturally brought him into disfavour with anti-Royalists, and his philosophical ones were the cause of his being looked on as a foe to religion, so that in 1651, after ten or eleven years spent among the leaders of thought in Paris, he seemed to have apprehended more danger from persecution from theologians there than from politicians in England, whither he accordingly returned and where he spent the remainder of his life, receiving a pension from the King after the Restoration, and living under the aegis of the Devonshires.

With regard to Hobbes's place in pure literature, it is to be remarked that his English prose is distinguished by its clearness, vigour, and precision, at a time when the first and third of these qualities were uncommon. With none of the impassioned fervour and rhythmical eloquence of some of his great contemporaries, he is entirely free from their accompanying faults of involved constructions and wearisome periods. He rarely indulges in decorations of any sort; his similes and illustrations are merely for the purpose of making his meaning clear by examples, not of adorning his pages; his constant endeavour is to be perfectly lucid, and he finds his way to achieve this by restricting the flow of words and using them with absolute accuracy. If some great stylists may be figured as having aimed at painting in words, we may conceive Hobbes as using the same instruments for diagrams. What he has to say he will put, as far as he can, in language as direct, definite, and logical as that of geometry; hence terseness and solid strength are his chief merits as a stylist, and

perhaps nearly the sum of them. But this is much, when we consider both the need of these qualities in those days and the influence that their importation into literary prose exercised over the writers immediately succeeding.

With regard to his place as a philosopher, there is little that can be said to advantage in these pages; the two following paragraphs from Hallam give the views of one qualified to judge, though his dicta have naturally not passed unchallenged:—

‘In nothing does Hobbes deserve more credit than in having set an example of close observation in the philosophy of the human mind. If he errs, he errs like a man who goes a little out of the right track, not like one who has set out on a wrong one. The eulogy of Stewart on Descartes, that he was the father of the experimental psychology, cannot be strictly wrested from him by Hobbes, inasmuch as the publications of the former are of an earlier date; but we may fairly say that the latter began as soon and prosecuted his inquiries further. It seems natural to presume that Hobbes, who is said to have been employed by Bacon, in translating some of his works into Latin, had at least been led by him to the inductive process which he has more than any other employed. But he has seldom mentioned his predecessor’s name; and, indeed, his mind was of a different stamp—less excursive, less quick in discovering analogies, and less fond of reasoning from them; but more close, perhaps more patient, and more apt to follow up a predominant idea, which sometimes becomes one of the *idola specus* that deceive him.

‘The political system of Hobbes, like his moral system, of which, in fact, it is only a portion, sears up the heart. It takes away the sense of wrong that has consoled the wise and good in their dangers, the proud appeal of innocence under oppression, like that of Prometheus to the elements, uttered to the witnessing world, to coming ages, to the just ear of Heaven. It confounds the principles of moral approbation, the notions of good and ill desert, in a servile idolatry of the monstrous Leviathan it creates, and, after sacrificing all right at the altar of power, denies to the Omnipotent the prerogative of dictating the laws of His own worship.’

CHAPTER XXI.

SURVEY OF THE YEARS 1660 TO 1700.

THE literary history of the period that lies between the Restoration and the beginning of the eighteenth century is very largely the history of Dryden and his works. He is the greatest of the men of letters whose work was mainly done in that epoch, and it is in his writings that the chief tendencies of the literature of the day are most completely and clearly seen. If we had to confine ourselves to the careful study of the works of one author alone in this period, we should of course take Milton, if choice of the greatest writer then living had to be made: but if we made our selection with a view to getting the representative writer of the age, we should do far better to take Dryden.

Milton's greatest work was done after the Restoration, it is true; but Milton, as we have seen, is to be classed—if classed at all—with the direct descendants of the Elizabethans and the men of the Commonwealth, not with the writers and thinkers of the era that opens (as far as a date can fix such things) with the Restoration. From the new men he learned nothing, and it was long before anything that influenced literature was learned of him. The mere fact that his blank verse found no imitators among lesser writers in his day, is striking enough proof of the want of sympathy between him and his later contemporaries. It may be that men admired Milton, but it is certain that it was Dryden whom they understood and loved: he learned from his age and taught it, interpreting it to itself after fashions it appreciated and

itself employed to the best of its ability. He spoke its own dialect with all its peculiarities, where Milton spoke the noble language of universal poetry in all its purity: his thoughts and the subject of them were bounded by the interests of those about him, and narrowed to his own day and place, where Milton's knew no confines of time or space. Hence, though Milton 'was not of an age but for all time,' Dryden, whether or not he was for 'all time'—and one must surely be prejudiced to think that he was—was very certainly the man for his age. And in considering this age of Dryden's, we may almost leave Milton out of count.¹

From what we have said, it will follow that the chief characteristics of the literary work of the time may be studied in the writing of Dryden; it will, however, be convenient to consider some of these in bare outline before making such a study. First and foremost, we may remind our readers of a change that we noticed in the form and spirit of much of our poetry during the preceding part of the century. We find Dryden saluting Waller and Denham as the first who taught the proper ways of handling English verse; we find Pope repeating the compliment with emphasis; Prior telling us that 'Denham and Waller improved our versification, and Dryden perfected it'; and even Dr. Johnson (in 1779) describing Denham as 'one of the fathers of English poetry.' If we seek the reasons of the great estimation in which these now little read poets were held by Dryden and his successors, we find that this was due to the fact that they were credited with introducing art and polish into our verse and getting rid of the irregularities and licence with which it was formerly written—with being, in fact, the founders of what we call the 'Classic' school.

The outward distinction between the 'Classic' and the 'Romantic' poet is the way in which each handles metre, and for the purposes of this book we may confine ourselves to the treatment of one particular

¹ For a full account of Milton's works after 1660 (viz. 'Paradise Lost,' 'Paradise Regained,' and 'Samson Agonistes'), the reader is referred to chapter xviii. (p. 305). Of poems in blank verse which may be attributed to Milton's example the only ones in this age to be mentioned are Roscommon's 'Art of Poetry' (1650) and John Philips' 'Splendid Shilling' (1705).

form of it—the decasyllabic rhyming couplet. The Classic versifier practically made a stanza of every two lines; he did not let the sense and grammatical structure of one couplet run on into the next without a very definite break at the end of the second line, and he closed each separate line as far as possible with a natural pause; he avoided lines of more than ten syllables, and he adhered to the normal type of the decasyllabic line (five iambs) as nearly as can be done in English verse. The Romantic writer, on the other hand, constantly makes use of the overflow [*enjambement*] from one line and one couplet to another, and is at no pains to make a pause at the close of a line; and he generally regards number of accents so much more than number of syllables, that lines of more than ten syllables are tolerably frequent. A specimen or two of each will make this difference in form obvious at once. Let us take a few lines from Ben Jonson:—

And though thou hadst small Latin and less Greek,
 From thence to honour thee, I would not seek
 For names, but call forth thundering Æschylus,
 Euripides and Sophocles to us,
 Pacuvius, Accius, him of Cordova dead,
 To life again, to hear thy buskin tread
 And shake a stage; or when thy socks were on,
 Leave thee alone for a comparison
 Of all that insolent Greece or haughty Rome
 Sent forth, or since did from their ashes come.
 Triumph, my Britain, thou hast one to show,
 To whom all scenes of Europe homage owe.
 He was not of an age, but for all time!
 And all the Muses still were in their prime,
 When, like Apollo, he came forth to warm
 Our ears, or like a Mercury to charm!

Or again, as better illustrating 'irregular' pauses and overflows, let us consider these lines of Chapman's:—

'Lately in Delos (with a charge of men
 Arrived, that rendered me most wretched then
 Now making me thus naked), I beheld
 The burthen of a palm, whose issue swelled
 About Apollo's fane, and that put on
 A grace like thee; for Earth had never none
 Of all her sylvan issue so adorned.
 Into amaze my very soul was turned,

To give it observation ; as now thee
 To view, O virgin, a stupidity
 Past admiration strikes me, joined with fear
 To do a suppliant's due, and press so near
 As to embrace thy knees.'

If we compare these lines with a specimen of Waller's work, we can see easily enough the meaning of Dryden's saying, that Waller 'first made writing easily an art, first showed us to conclude the sense most commonly in distichs [couplets], which in the verse of those before him runs on for so many lines together that the reader is out of breath to overtake it.' We have already quoted a few lines from both Denham and Waller which may be profitably contrasted with the above¹; but it will be convenient to give a little further example of these early writers of 'correct' verse here. This is from Waller's jubilation 'On the Prince's Escape at St. Andero,' and it is given merely as an illustration of the treatment of the metre :—

'While to his harp divine Arion sings
 The loves and conquests of our Albion kings;
 Of the fourth Edward was his noble song,
 Fierce, goodly, valiant, beautiful, and young;
 He rent the crown from vanquished Edward's head,
 Raised the white rose, and trampled on the red;
 Till Love triumphing o'er the victor's pride,
 Brought Mars and Warwick to the conquered side.

* * * * *

Ah! spare your sword, where beauty is to blame,
 Love gave the affront, and must repair the same,
 When France shall boast of her whose conquering eyes
 Have made the best of English hearts their prize.'

And this is from Denham's 'Cooper's Hill':—

'Under his proud survey the city lies,
 And like a mist beneath a hill doth rise,
 Whose state and wealth, the business and the crowd,
 Seems at this distance but a darker cloud,
 And is to him who rightly things esteems,
 No other in effect but what it seems.'

It is with Pope that we find the most finely finished workmanship of this classical couplet, as the reader may see by turning to the numerous extracts given in Chap. XXVII.;

¹ See pp. 294, 305.

but Pope undoubtedly learned his art of poetry, as far as verse-making is concerned, from Dryden,—Dryden, as we see, owned his indebtedness to certain earlier poets; but it was in his hands that the couplet was raised to the exalted and dignified position that it held for more than a century, during a large part of which it was the chief and almost the only metre employed for metrical work of any pretension outside song-writing.

The popularity of the classic couplet, the greater importance attached to adherence to definite rules of construction, and the horror in which all kinds of extravagance (in literature) was held by the men of this era were largely the result of a revolt and reaction against the excesses of the age immediately preceding, in which rant and bombast and exaggeration had endeavoured to supply the place of the vanished Elizabethan fervour. The tendency to make war on this was further helped by the example and precept of contemporary French writers, whose works most of the English authors of the day knew more or less familiarly, and admired. The reaction was inevitable, but it was more speedy and thorough in its effects owing to this foreign influence. And both tendencies served to banish the far-fetched ‘conceits,’ the strange analogies and combinations of odd images, the gaudy ornaments and astonishing comparisons that were so popular from Donne to Cowley, and that mark and mar Dryden’s earliest work: the ‘metaphysical school’ practically disappeared at the Restoration.

The same feelings and influences that caused the popularity of the classic metre must be held in large part responsible for a certain change in subject-matter. The generation that set such store in its versification on neatness and careful regard of convention, terseness and finish, polish and balance, demanded from its poets sobriety and lucidity, thoughtfulness and acuteness, and many of the qualities that we are accustomed to associate more peculiarly with prose. Hence the so-called ‘Age of Prose and Reason’ gives us freely the philosophical and didactic essay, the satire, and the pointed epigram, for all of which the ‘Classic’ couplet seems a

singularly appropriate vehicle. It rather avoids those stronger and deeper passions or more thrilling emotions which we are apt to look upon as the proper province of poetry. If it deals with them, it generally treats them in a more restrained—possibly in a more prosaic—way than the sixteenth or the nineteenth century approves of. Perhaps it may assist to the understanding of the difference between the Classic and Romantic treatment to consider what happens in each case in incompetent hands: the Romantic writer of the feebler sort becomes hysterical, involved, noisy and vulgar; the Classic becomes dull, prosy, monotonous.

Before passing on to a general consideration of the prose and the drama in this period, we will mention here the names of the chief poetical writers whose works we must shortly proceed to study in some detail. Apart from Milton's, there is, as we have said, no poetry written during this period which has an undisputed claim to a place in the literature of the world. But if there is little great poetry, there is plenty of first-rate verse, which in the case of Dryden, at any rate, nearly rises into the former category at times. The Restoration itself was the signal for a swarm of odes upon the 'Blessed Returne' (Cowley), 'Astrea Redux' (Dryden), etc., etc., which are chiefly notable for their inferiority to their authors' previous productions on the other side.

Of the older generation of Cavalier poets, Waller and Denham were the sole survivors, and their literary activity was over; but the younger generation, 'the mob of gentlemen who wrote with ease,' included Dorset, Rochester, Roscommon, and Mulgrave. Cowley, Waller, and Herrick all lived for some years after the Restoration; but the two latter wrote no more, while Cowley's best work after 1660 is in prose. Marvell's poetry, too, mostly belongs to an earlier date, though he wrote satires in verse and prose down to his death in 1678. Two other metrical satirists besides Marvell and Dryden will also demand our notice—viz., Butler and Oldham; and these are practically all the poets with whom we have to concern ourselves before the beginning of the eighteenth century.¹

¹ But see the remark in the first paragraph of p. 382.

In the drama the difference between the new and the old was even more marked, and more clearly the result of conscious endeavour than in the poetry. It would be possible, indeed, to look back upon Beaumont and Fletcher and Ben Jonson as holding something like the same position towards the drama after the Restoration as is given to Waller and Denham in respect to verse. And, indeed, it would probably not be difficult to show that their influence was more potent; that, alike in their defects and their merits, the heroic tragedy and the witty comedy of manners, as they were understood from Dryden to Congreve and Farquhar, were the legitimate heirs of Fletcher and Jonson. But it is, as a matter of fact, not necessary to go very deeply into this question here, and for this reason: at the Restoration, the theatres had been closed for nearly a score of years, and consequently there was no unbroken tradition or gradual evolution of the English play. The new writers deliberately turned to French models, adapted, translated, borrowed, and assimilated. It is true that what they learned from Corneille never resulted in anything very magnificent in the English, and that much of what they learned from Molière they would probably have arrived at if Molière had never written: but as a matter of fact they did learn their lesson largely from Corneille and Molière and their followers.

The time of the later Stuarts is richer in good stage plays than any period in the history of our literature, except the Elizabethan. The Court patronised the theatre eagerly, and the public, long debarred from this form of amusement, flocked to it again. The drama was no longer, as before, the outburst of national feeling, the expression of all that was strongest in the nation's life, it is true; but it attracted to itself many of the most cultivated, the most intelligent, the wittiest men of the time. It lacked the high seriousness, the intense passion of the great Romantic age; and with a large section it never took its place again either as a legitimate amusement or an elevating form of literature, because of its licentiousness and its levity. These qualities, on the other hand, were exactly what found favour with a considerable

portion, and not more with the Court—'which is the best and surest judge of writing,' according to Dryden—than with all who hated, or were sick of, Puritanism and everything that savoured of it. The patrons of the theatre did not go there to be deeply stirred, or to be moved to laughter by the humour that lies next to tears. They liked argument, rhetoric, and declamation in their tragedies, and they were not too nice about the genuineness of the sentiments or the fidelity of the picture: if the dramatist adhered to the newly discovered decencies of versification, and gave their intellects something to work upon in connection with the Unities and the French stage, so much the better. There might be poetry there too, but that was accidental, not essential. In comedy they wanted wit, smartness, repartee, brilliancy, briskness, and these they naturally found most attractive in connection with the manners of their own day, and the intrigues with which they were familiar. We get something like it in Jonson's comedies, if we deduct the ferocious moralist that stands behind them—something like it in Fletcher's, subtracting the poetic element; but with the poetry and the moralist this new comedy had nothing to do. Its hero is the licentious young gallant of excellent breeding and ready wit; its heroine is his feminine counterpart, in whom vivacity is regarded as more acceptable than virtue; its favourite theme is the outwitting of more or less honest dulness by unscrupulous dexterity; and its great achievement is the perfection of dialogue. With the romantic and idyllic Shakespearian comedy it has, of course, nothing in common but the name.

The most important of the playwrights whose activity begins with the Restoration is Dryden, though perhaps no single play of his, or of his contemporaries, possesses greater literary value than Otway's poetic tragedy, 'Venice Preserved.' Round Dryden we may group certain names very notable in their day but now chiefly interesting to us because of their relation to him—Lee, Settle, Shadwell, Howard, and Buckingham.

But the 'Restoration Comedy,' of which we have been more particularly speaking, and to which the name is

Dramatic
Writers,
1660—1714.

commonly applied, is the work of a somewhat later group of writers, whose activity was mainly exhibited 'Restoration Comedy.' in the reigns of William and Anne. Beginning with Etherege and Sedley, we include in this group Vanbrugh, Wycherley, Congreve, and Farquhar, ending early in the eighteenth century where the stage play as a form of literature becomes almost extinct.

The prose of this period is, perhaps, in one respect, more interesting and important to the modern reader than either the verse or the drama; for it is in this age that English prose, as we are accustomed to it nowadays, may be said to have arisen. Whether or not Cowley has the right to be considered one of the 'fathers' of the new poetry, he certainly has a strong claim to that position towards modern prose; and Dryden is scarcely a less powerful exponent of the one than the other. Roughly speaking, we may say, without running the risk of serious error, that those qualities which differentiate the verse of the Classic school from that of the Romantic, also distinguish the prose of the end of the seventeenth century and the succeeding age from that of pre-Restoration times. And we have gone back in verse to the Romantic ways, but in prose the reforms of syntax and sentence-moulding then introduced have held their own. The trailing and involved sentences of the older writers, the intricate constructions, the inherited confusions between the idioms allowable in an inflected language and leading to painful obscurities in an uninflected one, the ambitious anacoluthons resulting from attempts to compass more than English permits, rapidly disappear.¹

The New Prose. 'The one supreme command-

¹ 'When we find Chapman, the Elizabethan translator of Homer, expressing himself in his preface thus: "Though truth in her very nakedness sits in so deep a pit, that from Gades to Aurora and Ganges few eyes can sound her, I hope yet those few here will so discover and confirm, that, the date being out of her darkness in this morning of our poet, he shall now gird his temples with the sun,"—we pronounce that such a prose is intolerable. When we find Milton writing: "And long it was not after, when I was confirmed in this opinion, that he, who would not be frustrate of his hope to write well hereafter in laudable things, ought himself to be a true poem,"—we pronounce that such a prose has its own grandeur, but that it is obsolete and inconvenient. But when we find Dryden telling us: "What Virgil wrote in the vigour of his age, in plenty and at ease, I have undertaken to translate in my declining years; struggling with wants, oppressed with sickness, curbed in my genius, liable to be misconstrued in all I write,"—then we exclaim that here at last we have the true English prose, a prose such as we would all gladly use if we only knew how. Yet Dryden was Milton's contemporary.'—MATTHEW ARNOLD.

ment, *Be thou clear*,' was what the children of Phoebus heard in those days, according to a poet of our own time, and they obeyed it in prose as in verse. The 'regularity, uniformity, precision, balance,' which Matthew Arnold regards as 'the needful qualities of a fit prose,' are rarely lacking in the work of the average man of letters of that age. If we miss in Cowley and Dryden and Temple that magnificent sonorousness and those flashes of poetic passion which ever and anon burst through the prose of Hooker or Raleigh or Milton, we have to console ourselves by reflecting on the general high average of their writing, their more equable polish, their pervading grace, and their easy lucidity.

The change, however, was not introduced all at once, though it spread very rapidly. Certain writers
 Clarendon. have strong traces of the old influence upon them, and one at least of the greatest of this age, Hyde, Earl of Clarendon, is practically uninfluenced by the new. Moreover, the author of what is incontestably—if we exclude Milton—the greatest imaginative work of the age, is practically uninfluenced by the literary tendencies of the time.

This is John Bunyan, whom there is no profit in
 Bunyan. endeavouring to group with any of these writers. And the two authors whose influence on the thought of their age and later times is as powerful as that of any of their contemporaries stand apart from the literary stream for a different reason—it is the subject-matter alone of Locke's works that renders them remarkable, and while the same consideration applies to Newton even more strongly, he is further excluded from our study here by the fact that the '*Principia*' is written in Latin.

CHAPTER XXII.

JOHN DRYDEN (1631—1700).

DRYDEN came of a good Northamptonshire family, and was educated at Westminster School, where (in the year 1649) he wrote the verses 'Upon the Death of Lord Hastings.' These are a good example of the worst style of the far-fetched 'conceits' and 'metaphysical' ingenuities then prevalent though shortly to disappear. In mentioning this effusion it is only necessary to add that Dryden fortunately wrote nothing else quite in this vein; but it may be interesting to quote a few lines both as a specimen of the kind of thing written while the Marinistic influence, the tendency that had prevailed from Donne to Cowley, was still strong on him, and as an indication of an early mastery over the form of the couplet :—

' His body was an orb, his sublime soul
Did move on virtue's and on learning's pole :
Whose regular motions better to our view,
Than Archimedes' sphere to heaven did shew.
Graces and virtues, languages and arts,
Beauty and learning filled up all the parts.
Heaven's gifts, which do, like falling stars, appear
Scattered in others, all, as in their sphere,
Were fixed, and conglobate in his soul ; and thence
Shone through his body with sweet influence,
Letting their glories so in each limb fall,
The whole frame rendered was celestial.'

He presently furnishes a better example than this of the extraordinary unpoetical comparisons and perversely clever analogies into which he who would out-Cowley Cowley could be forced, when he refers to Hastings' death from small-pox :—

'Blisters with pride, which through's flesh did sprout
 Like rose-buds, stuck i' the lily skin about.
 Each little pimple had a tear in it,
 To wail the thought his rising did commit:
 Which, rebel like, with its own lord at strife,
 Thus made an insurrection 'gainst his life.
 Or were these gems sent to adorn his skin,
 The cabinet of a richer soul within?
 No comet need foretell his change drew on,
 Whose corpse might seem a constellation.'

We turn gladly from this terrible stuff to the first composition of his manhood, the 'Heroic Stanzas on the Death of Oliver Cromwell,' which appeared in 1658. The poet after leaving Cambridge (Trinity College) seems to have had the advantage of the friendship and help of his relative Sir John Dryden, who was a rigid Puritan, and to have been on intimate terms with other more or less influential men of the same party. He himself, at this time and among these surroundings, was probably genuinely possessed of Puritan principles, and there seems no touch of insincerity in the poem mentioned above. The versification is good, and the style is dignified, though still marred by strained similes and artificial expressions:—

'Such was our prince; yet owned a soul above
 The highest acts it could produce to show:
 Thus poor mechanic arts in public move,
 While the deep secrets beyond practice go.

'Nor died he when his ebbing fame went less,
 But when fresh laurels courted him to live:
 He seemed but to prevent¹ some new success,
 As if above what triumphs earth could give.'

The concluding stanza, as it is the simplest and most direct, is also perhaps the finest:—

'His ashes in a peaceful urn shall rest,
 His name a great example stands, to show
 How greatly high endeavours may be blest
 Where piety and valour jointly go.'

However, the Restoration put an end to any benefit Dryden might have derived from his influential Puritan friends, and left him to subsist on his small patrimony—he

¹ Anticipate.

had inherited about £60 a year in 1654—and his pen. Accordingly (like Waller, Cowley, and many more of less note) he promptly began to use it to welcome back the representative of all that was hateful to him whom he had lately been lauding in verse. ‘*Astrea Redux: A Poem* [in over 300 lines in heroic metre] on the Happy Restoration and Return of his Sacred Majesty Charles II.,’ was followed by another 140 lines addressed to the same ‘Sacred Majesty: A Panegyric on his Coronation.’ Both these productions are interesting, as showing how well by this time he could handle the heroic couplet; but they possess little other merit. This extract will do to show the style and matter of these verses; it is from the ‘Panegyric’:—

‘Had greater haste these sacred rites prepared,
Some guilty months had in your triumphs shared;
But this untainted year is all your own;
Your glories may without our crimes be shown.
We had not yet exhausted all our store,
When you refreshed our joys by adding more:
As heaven, of old, dispensed celestial dew,
You gave us manna, and still give us new.’

If the poet expected any manna of a tangible sort from the king, he must have been disappointed at first; nor does a similar poem of eighty couplets, addressed to the famous Lord Chancellor Hyde, seem to have had any material effect on the poet's circumstances. One effect of the Restoration, however, which we have already noted, was the reopening of the theatres, and of this Dryden promptly took advantage. In 1663 the poet married Lady Elizabeth Howard (sister of the Sir Robert Howard who was afterwards Dryden's coadjutor in the ‘*Indian Queen*’), and the union seems to have not been a very happy one; at any rate, his scurrilous enemies subsequently overwhelmed him with taunts and abuse on the subject. In the year of his marriage and the two following ones he wrote nothing except for the stage. From the spring of 1665 to the end of 1666, however, the theatres were closed by authority (owing to the Plague and the Fire), and it was towards the end of the latter year that he wrote the ‘*Annus Mirabilis*,’ or the ‘*Year of Wonders*.’ This is a long poem (written in the four-lined metre Dryden had used for the ‘*Heroic Stanzas*’)

on the subject of the Dutch War, the Fire of London, and the virtues of King Charles and his relatives. It is loaded with the blemishes which we have pointed out as spoiling the poem on Cromwell, and in some verses sinks nearly to the level of the lines on Lord Hastings. The wearisome technical descriptions of the fight, etc., and the absurdly forced similes which occur in well-nigh every quatrain, go far to make it almost what Hazlitt has called it—'a tissue of far-fetched, heavy, lumbering conceits, and in the worst style of what has been denominated metaphysical poetry.' The versification is good, however, and there are isolated poetical passages—*e.g.*, the nine verses of the king's prayer, of which we quote this one:

"O God," said he, "thou Patron of my days,
Guide of my youth in exile and distress!
Who me unfriended brought'st, by wondrous ways,
The kingdom of my fathers to possess."

The theatres were now opening again, and to them Dryden devoted all his energies for the next fourteen or fifteen years; by this means he rapidly rose in the estimation of the Court and the public, and was able, from his plays, to earn a fair income, which was further increased by his salary as Poet Laureate and Historiographer Royal. D'Avenant, who preceded him in the Laureateship, had died in 1668, and Howell, the Historiographer Royal, two years before; Dryden received both appointments (together worth £200 a year) in 1670. During this period he had made many enemies, but the time was now coming for him to gibbet them, and to establish his own fame as a satirist. Up to this time (his plays apart) he had written nothing to which any higher title than tolerably good verse can, with any regard to truth, be given; but in the score of years now left to him he wrote those poems on which his great fame deservedly rests. In 1679 there had appeared an 'Essay upon Satire,' a witty poem, in smooth, sarcastic, decasyllabic verse, the author of which was Mulgrave. Dryden, however, had had some share in the composition, which ridiculed (among others) Dorset and Rochester. The latter—of whom the satirist wrote

'To every face he cringes while he speaks,
And when the back is turned the head he breaks'

—to get his revenge on Dryden, caused him to be waylaid and beaten by a gang of bullies. It is believed that Dryden had little hand in the satire, and that Mulgrave had written the lines about Rochester, whose bitter personal foe he was. Be this as it may, Dryden's chief work was henceforth to be satirical. The occasion of his next and greatest work is historical¹; it was written in 1681, at the time when 'the intrigues of Monmouth and Shaftesbury for the exclusion of the Duke of York's right of succession, the popular excitement at the duke's avowed popery, aggravated by the late supposed plot, led to continued disputes between the king and the Parliament on the Exclusion Bill. Shaftesbury in vain endeavoured to persuade the king to conciliate Parliament by a proposal to settle the succession on Monmouth. To this Charles would not consent, and on March 28, 1681, the Bill of Exclusion was once more brought in and read a first time. The king, who had foreseen, and was prepared for, this emergency, instantly dissolved Parliament, and followed up the step by a prosecution of all who had taken an active part in the agitation against the duke. On the 2nd of July Shaftesbury was committed to the Tower on a charge of subornation and treason. The press was busied with hosts of scribblers against the king, the duke, and the Ministry; and their effusions were read and sung, and applauded throughout the kingdom. A writer was required on the royal side, especially to prejudice the public mind against Shaftesbury, previously to the bill of indictment being preferred. Dryden, by his position as Laureate, his talents, and probably his predilections, was well qualified for the task. His friends, too, Ormond, Halifax, and Hyde, were on the royal side; opposed to it were Buckingham (author of the 'Rehearsal'), Shadwell, and Settle. . . . He sat down to write the satire of 'Absalom and Achitophel,' and on November 17, 1681—a few days before the bill of indictment against Shaftesbury was presented—it was published. Its success was beyond example. . . . Dr. Johnson relates that his father, who was a bookseller, told him that

¹ His only satirical verse before this was a short piece 'On the Dutch' (1662), of no great merit.

its sale exceeded anything in his remembrance, excepting that of Sacheverel's famous Trial.

'The allusions which it contained became universally known; and the allegorical names seemed to be inalienably entailed upon the persons to whom Dryden had assigned them.¹ Not only were they in perpetual use among the Court poets of the day, but the parable was repeatedly inculcated and preached upon from the pulpit, and echoed and re-echoed in all the addresses of the time.'² *Absalom*, of course, was the ill-fated Monmouth; *Achitophel*, Shaftesbury; King Charles figures as *David*; Elkanah Settle is *Doeg*, and Shadwell, *Og*;³ Villiers, Duke of Buckingham, is described under the name of *Zimri* in lines which must have made him sincerely sorry for his 'Rehearsal'⁴ :—

'A man so various that he seemed to be
Not one, but all mankind's epitome;
Stiff in opinion, always in the wrong;
Was everything by starts, and nothing long:
But in the course of one revolving moon,
Was chymist, fiddler, statesman, and buffoon.

This is the famous portrait of Shaftesbury:—

'Of these the false Achitophel was first,
A name to all succeeding ages curst:
For close designs and crooked counsels fit;
Sagacious, bold, and turbulent of wit;
Restless, unfixed in principles and place;
In power unpleased, impatient of disgrace;
A fiery soul, which, working out its way,
Fretted the pigmy-body to decay,
And o'er-informed the tenement of clay.
A daring pilot in extremity;
Pleased with the danger, when the waves went high
He sought the storms; but for a calm unfit,
Would steer too nigh the sands to boast his wit.
Great wits are sure to madness near allied,
And thin partitions do their bounds divide;
Else why should he, with wealth and honour blest,
Refuse his age the needful hours of rest?

¹ Some of these names, it is true, had already been applied to Dryden's victims (notably Achitophel to Shaftesbury), but Dryden made them popular.

² From the Introduction to the edition of Dryden's Poems in the Aldine Series, by the Rev. R. Hooper.

³ Settle and Shadwell are mentioned in the 2nd part only (see p. 370).

⁴ A satirical play burlesquing and ridiculing the bombastic rhymed plays at the time, and particularly the work of Dryden (who figures as 'Mr. Bayes').

Punish a body which he could not please,
 Bankrupt of life, yet prodigal of ease?
 And all to leave what with his toil he won,
 To that unfeathered two-legged thing, a son;
 Got, while his soul did huddled notions try;
 And born a shapeless lump, like anarchy.
 In friendship false, implacable in hate;
 Resolved to ruin or to rule the state.
 To compass this the triple bond he broke;
 The pillars of the public safety shook;
 And fitted Israel for a foreign yoke:
 Then, seized with fear, yet still affecting fame,
 Usurped a patriot's all-atoning name.'

In spite of the satire, Shaftesbury was acquitted, and became the popular hero of the day. A medal was struck off with his head and name on one side, the sun issuing from the clouds, with the motto *Laetamur*, on the other. This was the occasion of Dryden's 'The Medal: a Satire against Sedition,' which appeared in 1682 and is devoted to lashing Shaftesbury and his supporters.¹ The style and metre are those of 'Absalom,' save that there are more triple rhymes in proportion to its length, and Alexandrines occur pretty frequently. Here are a dozen lines for a specimen, of which the workmanship is so exactly like that of Pope, half a century later, that it would be impossible for a critic to decide from internal evidence which poet wrote them:—

'Athens, no doubt, did righteously decide,
 When Phocion and when Socrates were tried;
 As righteously they did those dooms repent;
 Still, they were wise, whichever way they went:
 Crowds err not, though to both extremes they run;
 To kill the father and recall the son.
 Some think the fools were most as times went then,
 But now the world's o'erstocked with prudent men.
 The common cry is e'en religion's test,
 The Turk's is at Constantinople best;
 Idols in India; Popery at Rome;
 And our own worship only true at home.'

¹ 'Absalom and Achitophel' was immediately answered by a number of writers, among whom were Settle (Absalom Senior), Pordage, and 'a person of honour,' who is thought to have been the Duke of Buckingham; and 'The Medal' was likewise at once attacked by a similar crew.

Dryden's next satire was the 'MacFlecknoë,' a short poem in which Flecknoe is depicted as

'—pondering which of all his sons was fit
To reign, and wage immortal war with wit,
Cried, 'Tis resolved, for nature pleads, that he
Should only rule who most resembles me.
Shadwell alone my perfect image bears,
Mature in dulness from his tender years;
Shadwell alone, of all my sons, is he
Who stands confirmed in full stupidity.
The rest to some faint meaning make pretence,
But Shadwell never deviates into sense.'

A month later (November 1682), the unfortunate Shadwell was rancorously attacked again, along with Settle, under the title of Og and Doeg, in the second part of 'Absalom and Achitophel,' which was mainly the work of Tate, but to which Dryden contributed some two hundred lines or more. In this same year 1682 appeared the 'Religio Laici,' a poem in which Dryden states his faith, and his reasons for his faith as a Protestant. 'We are to regard Dryden,' says Matthew Arnold, 'as the puissant and glorious founder, Pope as the splendid high-priest, of our excellent and indispensable eighteenth century. For the purposes of their mission and destiny, their poetry, like their prose, is admirable,' and indeed much of the poem mentioned above has no quality save its metre and rhyme to distinguish it from the equally caustic, well-reasoned, well-balanced prose. Yet in 'The Religio,' as well as in 'The Hind,' there are passages of as fine poetry as any that Dryden has written—*e.g.*, the opening lines in 'The Religio':—

'Dim as the borrowed beams of moon and stars,
To lonely, weary, wandering travellers,
Is reason to the soul; and as on high
Those rolling fires discover but the sky,
Not light us here, so Reason's glimmering ray
Was lent, not to assure our doubtful way,
But guide us upward to a better day.
And as those nightly tapers disappear,
When day's bright lord ascends our hemisphere;
So pale grows Reason at Religion's sight;
So dies, and so dissolves in supernatural light.'

The 'MacFlecknoë' is a fragment or episode of a mock epio poem. Pope's 'Dunciad' is its legitimate offspring—bigger, but perhaps not greater, than its parent; for its title see p. 387.

It will be noticed that Dryden uses the 'overflow,' the triplets, and the other methods of breaking the regularity of the couplet more frequently in some parts of this poem than is his wont. There is an interesting passage in his introduction to it—a capital specimen of his strong, lucid prose—which has some bearing upon this, and is, for other reasons, worth quoting here:—

'It remains that I acquaint the reader, that these verses were written for an ingenuous young gentleman, my friend, upon his translation of The Critical History of the Old Testament, composed by the learned father Simon: the verses, therefore, are addressed to the translator of that work, and the style of them is, what it ought to be, epistolary.

'If anyone be so lamentable a critic as to require the smoothness, the numbers, and the turn of heroic poetry in this poem, I must tell him, that if he has not read Horace, I have studied him, and hope the style of his epistles is not ill imitated here. The expressions of a poem designed purely for instruction ought to be plain and natural, and yet majestic; for here the poet is presumed to be a kind of lawgiver, and those three qualities which I have named are proper to the legislative style. The florid, elevated, figurative way is for the passions; for love and hatred, fear and anger, are begotten in the soul, by showing their objects out of their true proportion, either greater than the life or less; but instruction is to be given by showing them what they naturally are. A man is to be cheated into passion, but to be reasoned into truth.'

'The Hind and Panther,' to which we have alluded above, belongs to a somewhat later date (1686-7) than the 'Religio,' but it is so closely connected with it in form and matter, that it may be conveniently noticed here; it is a defence, under the form of a fable, or allegory, of the Roman Catholic Church,

'A milk-white hind, immortal and unchanged,'
against the Church of England,

'The panther, sure the noblest next the hind,
And fairest creature of the spotted kind,'

'the bloody Boar, an *independent* beast,' the 'quaking Hare' (Quakers), 'the buffoon Ape' (Atheists and Deists), 'false Reynard' (Arians and Socinians), and so forth. What caused Dryden to change his religion has from his days to ours been matter of dispute: it will suffice for us to say that though it took place at a convenient date (the accession of a Roman Catholic king), and though he seems to

have had a pension more or less in consequence, yet that pension may have been only a genuine revival of the Laureate's salary, which at first James II. had discontinued, and also that Dryden's wife (and probably his eldest son) had been already converted to the Roman faith. It should be noted, too, that when Dryden might have profited by turning Protestant again, in 1688 (when, on the accession of King William, he could no longer as a Papist hold office), he adhered to his adopted creed, and later on in life (1700) gave another proof of his independence of spirit by refusing to allow his 'Virgil' to be dedicated to King William, in spite of the publisher Tonson's earnest entreaties.

A poem that appeared between the publication of 'The Religio' and 'The Hind' scarcely claims a passing notice, viz., the 'Threnodia Augustalis,' an ode on the death of Charles II. It is said that there are some fine lines in this bombastic, adulatory, and inharmonious composition. We have not, we confess, been fortunate enough to find them. Stanza xiii., however, though quite as wooden and unpoetic as the rest of the composition, is interesting for the remarks Dryden makes on the effect of Charles's accession with regard to poetry:—

'So, rising from his father's urn,
So glorious did our Charles return ;
The officious muses came along—
A gay harmonious quire, like angels ever young ;
The muse that mourns him now his happy triumph sung.
E'en they could thrive in this auspicious reign ;
And such a plenteous crop they bore
Of purest and well-winnowed grain,
As Britain never knew before.
Though little was their hire and light their gain,
Yet somewhat to their share he threw ;
Fed from his hand, they sung and flew
Like birds of paradise that lived on morning dew.'

If this ode may be taken as a sample of how badly Dryden could write, two others will show what great poetic powers he could exhibit in this form of verse. These are the two odes on 'St. Cecilia's Day,' the first a short poem of about sixty lines, written in 1687; the more famous one, longer and more elaborate, ten years later. 'Alexander's Feast,' as the second ode is named, may

perhaps be justly called the most 'poetic' of all Dryden's writings in its depicting of the various passions and the arousing of sympathetic emotions in the reader. It is probably the most widely known of all Dryden's compositions, and many of the lines have become stock quotations. We give here a portion of one of the choruses:

'Softly sweet in Lydian measures,
 Soon he soothed his soul to pleasures.
 War, he sung, is toil and trouble ;
 Honour but an empty bubble ;
 Never ending, still beginning,
 Fighting still, and still destroying ;
 If the world be worth thy winning,
 Think, O think it worth enjoying :
 Lovely Thais sits beside thee ;
 Take the good the gods provide thee !'

The rest of Dryden's poetical works will not occupy us long. At various times (1684-85, 1692-94) volumes of his 'Miscellanies' and 'Translations' appeared. These contain besides the odes many beautiful occasional pieces and lyrics, together with a number of translations of portions of the classics (Theocritus, Lucretius, Horace, Juvenal, Persius, and Virgil). His translation of the latter's 'Third Georgic' (in 1693-94) was the beginning of his taking in hand an English metrical version of all Virgil's works, which he completed in 1697. This translation met with immediate success, and has maintained its position as one of the best (if not the best) English translations of a classic poet. Johnson (who is responsible for the opinion that no reader ever wished 'Paradise Lost' *longer*) has praised Dryden for making his Virgil *interesting* to the highest degree ; we may here, perhaps, be allowed to add that we reckon this power of holding the reader's attention as one of Dryden's chief merits ; his longer poems are all on topical, political, or personal subjects, and it was not his province in them (perhaps not in his power) to create character or stir our deeper feelings ; yet if one dips at random into 'Absalom and Achitophel,' 'MacFlecknoe,' 'Religio Laici,' or even the long and occasionally puerile 'Hind and the Panther,' it is difficult to read long without getting enthralled, or to close the book without reading to the end.

The 'Virgil' was published three years before Dryden's death; on finishing it he took up the project of translating Homer, which he, however, did not live to complete. In the year of his death his 'Fables' (from Chaucer and Boccaccio) appeared, and met with universal approbation; he died at the height of his literary fame, the undisputed king of English men of letters of the day.

Dryden's prose, of which a specimen has already been given, and to the general characteristics of which we have already referred, remains to be treated in a little more detail. Most of it appeared by way of preface to the published version of his plays, and frequently, too, he added to his poems (*e.g.*, his 'Epistle to the Whigs' in 'The Medal') an introductory letter or dedication. His criticisms and explanations are more valuable for the insight they give us into his mind, and for the means they afford us of judging of his prose style, than for their own intrinsic merit, though that is not slight. Undoubtedly the most interesting of these productions is the 'Essay on Dramatic Poesie,' first issued in 1667. It is in the form of a dialogue between Dryden (Neander), Howard (Crites), Dorset (Eugenius), and Sedley (Lisideius) on the comparative merits of the 'Elizabethan' drama and the contemporary, modelled on the style of the rhymed French classic plays, of which latter form Dryden was at that time a supporter. Dryden has the distinction of being the introducer of that style of criticism which flourished during the greater part of the following century, and in some respects still prevails. There had been other English writers on English literature before Dryden, it is true (*e.g.*, Sidney, Puttenham, etc.), but he is the first we meet who deserves the name of critic. Of his style it will suffice to say that he abandoned the long-winded, cumbrous sentences of the earlier prose-writers, and used a simple, straightforward, vigorous mode of expressing his meaning. He is not the wielder of a great prose style such as is Milton at his best, or Taylor, or Bunyan, or Carlyle; nor a writer of extreme taste and elegance like Temple or Addison or many essayists and critics of a later day. His greatest merit is that he can use prose as a fit means of expressing his thoughts so as to

make them at once clear to others. The following extract from the 'Essay' shows him to advantage, and is interesting from its subject matter:—

'As for Jonson, to whose character I am now arrived, if we look upon him while he was himself (for his last plays were but his dotages), I think him the most learned and judicious writer which any theatre ever had. He was a most severe judge of himself, as well as others. One cannot say he wanted wit, but rather that he was frugal of it. In his works you find little to retrench or alter. Wit and language, and humour also, in some measure, we had before him; but something of art was wanting to the drama till he came. He managed his strength to more advantage than any who preceded him. You seldom find him making love in any of his scenes, or endeavouring to move the passions: his genius was too sullen and saturnine to do it gracefully; especially when he knew he came after those who had performed both to such a height.

'Humour was his proper sphere; and in that he delighted most to represent mechanic people.

'He was deeply conversant in the Ancients, both Greek and Latin; and he borrowed boldly from them. There is scarce a poet or historian, among the Roman authors of those times, whom he has not translated in "Sejanus" and "Catiline." But he has done his robberies so openly, that one may see he fears not to be taxed by any law. He invades authors like a monarch; and what would be theft in other poets, is only victory in him. With the spoils of these writers, he so represents old Rome to us, in its rites, ceremonies, and customs, that if one of their own poets had written either of his tragedies, we had seen less of it than in him. If there was any fault in his language, 'twas that he weaved it too closely and laboriously in his serious plays. Perhaps, too, he did a little too much *Romanize* our tongue, leaving the words which he translated almost as much Latin as he found them: wherein, though he learnedly followed the idiom of their language, he did not enough comply with ours.

'If I would compare him with Shakespeare, I must acknowledge him the more correct poet, but Shakespeare the greater wit. Shakespeare was the Homer, or father of our dramatic poets; Jonson was the Virgil, the pattern of elaborate writing; I admire him, but I love Shakespeare.'

We have already said that Dryden was one of the first to take advantage of the reopening of the theatres. His plays. 'Of the stago, when he had once invaded it,' says Johnson, 'he kept possession for many years; not, indeed, without the competition of rivals, who sometimes prevailed, or the censure of critics, which was often poignant and often just; but with such a degree of reputation as made him at least secure of being heard, whatever might be the

— final determination of the public.' His first drama was 'The Duke of Guise,' which, however, he laid aside unfinished in 1662, but completed, in collaboration with Lee, twenty years later, when it was turned into a play with a political purpose, directed against the supporters of Monmouth. The first of Dryden's plays to be represented on the stage was a prose-comedy, 'The Wild Gallant,' which met with no success; but his next venture, 'The Rival Ladies' (1663), a play in which 'the tragic scenes are written in rhyme, the lighter scenes . . . in blank verse,' was better received. In the dedication to Lord Orrery, prefixed to the published play in 1664, Dryden upheld that rhyme was more fitting than blank verse for the language of tragedy, and accordingly his next plays, 'The Indian Queen' and 'The Indian Emperor,' are both rhymed. 'The Indian Queen' was written in conjunction with Sir Robert Howard, Dryden's brother-in-law. Howard, in a preface to his own plays, in 1665, took up the cudgels against Dryden, maintaining that blank verse, though too mean and low for a poem,¹ was the fit metre for a play. This called forth a reply from Dryden, in the 'An Essay of Dramatic Poesie' already referred to, which was again answered by Howard in the preface to his 'Duke of Lerma,' which produced the somewhat acrimonious 'Defence of the Essay' prefixed to the second edition of "The Indian Emperor," in 1668. To the year before this two comedies belong, 'Secret Love; or, The Maiden Queen,' which Mr. Dryden himself in his preface seems to brag of, says Pepys, 'and is indeed a good play,' and 'Sir Martin Marall,' an adaptation of Molière's 'L'Etourdi.' 'The Tempest,' which also appeared in 1667, was a version of Shakespeare's play, and Davenant had some part in it. 'An Evening's Love; or, The Mock Astrologer' was another comedy: it was acted at the King's Theatre (which Dryden had contracted to supply with three plays a year²), and met with little success. Dryden's next two plays were tragedies in rhyme, 'Tyrannic Love; or, The Royal Martyr' (1668) and 'The

¹ It must be remembered that Milton's later works were not yet published (see p. 354).

² This is computed to have brought him £800 to £400 a year.

Conquest of Granada' (in two parts, 1669—1670), which latter was one of his most successful plays. 'The two parts of "The Conquest of Granada,"' says Johnson, 'are written with a seeming determination to glut the public with dramatic wonders, to exhibit in its highest elevation a theatrical meteor of incredible love and impossible valour, and to leave no room for a wilder flight to the extravagance of posterity. All the rays of romantic heat, whether amorous or warlike, glow in Almanzor by a kind of concentration. He is above all laws; he is exempt from all restraints; he ranges the world at will, and governs wherever he appears. He fights without inquiring the cause, and loves in spite of the obligations of justice and of prohibition from the dead. Yet the scenes are, for the most part, delightful; they exhibit a kind of illustrious depravity, and majestic madness, such as, if it is often despised, is often revered, and in which the ridiculous is mingled with the astonishing.'¹

It was in 1670, after the production of 'The Conquest of Granada,' with which (or with Nell Gwynne, who acted in it) Charles II. was immensely pleased, that the Laureateship (as we have mentioned) was conferred on Dryden, who figures in Villiers' 'Rehearsal,' which was produced next year, as Mr. Bayes. Dryden's next plays were comedies—'The Marriage à la Mode' (1672) and 'Love in a Nunnery,' in the same year. To the war against the Dutch (1673) is due 'Amboyna,' a poor play in rhyme (with a good deal of prose), intended to augment the hatred of its hearers against our foes. It was followed in 1674 (the year of Milton's death) by a rhymed version in dramatic form of 'Paradise Lost,' entitled 'The State of Innocence.' Dryden calls this production an opera, though perhaps 'burlesque' would be a fitter title for it; however, it was apparently not intended for acting, and Dryden seems to have been, to some small degree at least, conscious of the greatness of Milton's poem, which he admits to be 'one of the greatest, most noble, and sublime which either this

¹ Elkanah Settle (1648—1724), whom Dryden savagely ridiculed in 1673 for his 'Empress of Morocco,' calling its author, *inter alia*, 'an animal of most deplorable understanding,' replied with some equally civil observations on 'The Conquest of Granada.'

age or nation has produced.¹ A far worthier work—perhaps the best of all Dryden's plays—was 'Aureng-Zebe,' which appeared next year. This is the last of his rhyming tragedies, and in the prologue he shows that he was not of the opinion that he had so stoutly maintained a dozen years before against Sir R. Howard. The poet

'out of no feigned modesty, this day
Damns this laborious trifle of a play;
Not that it's worse than what before he writ,
But he has now another taste of wit;
And, to confess a truth, though out of time,
Grows weary of his long-loved mistress Rhyme.'

In this prologue he declares

'That, spite of all his pride, a secret shame
Invades his breast at Shakespeare's sacred name ;'

and his next venture was a tragedy founded on 'Antony and Cleopatra,' entitled 'All for Love; or, The World Well Lost.' In the same year (1678) he produced 'Lamberham; or, The Kind Keeper,' a play which was prohibited,² and 'Cædipus,' in which Lee collaborated. In 1679 and 1680 no play of Dryden's appeared, but in 1681 he came forward with 'The Spanish Friar,' a 'Protestant play,' which was highly successful, partly, no doubt, on its own merits, which are considerable, but in great measure, too, from the way in which, 'at a time when the nation was rabid about Oates's supposed plot,' the Roman Catholic religion was held up to scorn. In the year of the accession of James II. appeared a political 'opera,' 'Albion and Albanus,' one of the poorest of his works. The music is said to have been as bad as the poetry, which caused some wag to remark that the poet and the composer seemed to have 'mistaken their trade; the former writing the music, the latter the verse.' This is the only play of Dryden's that belongs to the reign of James, but after the Revolution (when Dryden lost his Laureateship, and—insult added to injury—was succeeded by Shadwell) he turned to the stage again, and produced (in 1690) 'Don Sebastian,' which is ranked

¹ But Dryden said about as much at various times for Denham, Waller, Davenant, Mulgrave, etc.

² 'For its indelicacy'; but on this ground a very large part both of Dryden's work and of most of his contemporaries' might equally justly have been suppressed.

by some above 'Aurang-Zeba,' 'Amphitryon' (1690), 'King Arthur' (1691), 'Oleomenes' (1692), and 'Love Triumphant' (1693), are his last plays. The first of these is a comedy adapted from Molière's adaptation of 'Plautus'; the next is an 'opera' (in which and in 'Don Sébastien' some trace the influence of Milton); the third is a tragedy written in conjunction with Southerne; and the last of Dryden's dramatic works was a tragi-comedy, which was an utter failure, so that, as Johnson says, 'he began and ended his dramatic labours with an ill success.' In Dryden's plays we may find specimens of all the stage productions of the age—the licentious comedy, the 'opera,' the grandiose (and often ranting) tragedy in rhyme, blank verse, and prose. He has left behind him some thirty dramatic pieces, of which the bulk have not great literary merit, while some are utterly unworthy; but two, or at most three, are fine tragedies, which rank as high as any works of their time, and are perhaps as good as any that have yet been written since the Elizabethan age. As a fair specimen of his rhyming verse in tragedy the following brief extract from 'Aurang-Zebe' may serve:—

Emperor. Your fate has called you to the imperial seat:
In duty be, as you in arms are, great;
For Aureng-Zebe a hated name is grown,
And Love less bears a rival than the throne.

Morat. To me the cries of fighting fields are charms
Keen be my sabre, and of proof my arms,
I ask no other blessing of my stars:
No prize but Fame, nor mistress but the wars.
I scarce am pleased I tamely mount the throne.
Would Aureng-Zebe had all their souls in one,
With all my elder brothers I would fight,
And so from partial Nature force my right.

E. Had we but lasting youth and time to spare
Some might be thrown away on Fame and War.
But youth, the perishing good runs on too fast,
And unenjoyed will spend itself to waste;
Few know the use of life before 'tis past.
Had I once more thy vigour to command,
I would not let it die upon my hand.
No hour of pleasure should pass empty by;
Youth should watch joys and shoot them as they fly.

- M.* Methinks all pleasure is in greatness found,
Kings, like Heaven's eye, should spread their beams around,
Pleased to be seen while Glory's race they run :
Rest is not for the chariot of the sun.
Subjects are stiff-necked animals : they soon
Feel slack'd reins, and pitch their rider down.
- N.* To thee that dread glory of power I give :
Cares be thy lot, reign thou, and let me live.
The fort I'll keep for my security,
Business and public state resign to thee.
- M.* Luxurious kings are to their people lost ;
They live, like drones, upon the public cost.
My arms, from pole to pole, the world shall shake,
And, with myself, keep all mankind awake,
- E.* Believe me, son, and needless trouble spare,
'Tis a base world, and is not worth our care ;
The vulgar and scarce animated clod
Ne'er pleased with aught above them, Prince or God.
Were I a God, the drunken globe should roll,
The little emmets with the human soul
Care for themselves, while at my ease I sate,
And Second Causes did the work of Fate ;
Or, if I did take care, that care should be
For Wit that scorned the world and lived like me.

For an illustration of his blank verse we will take a passage from 'Don Sebastian':—

Sebastian. I have not yet forgot I am a king,
Whose royal office is redress of wrongs ;
If I have wronged thee, charge me face to face ;
I have not yet forgot I am a soldier.

Dorac. 'Tis the first justice thou hast ever done me ;
Then, though I loathe this woman's war of tongues,
Yet shall my cause of vengeance first be clear ;
And, Honour, be thou judge !

Seb. Honour befriend us both !
Beware ! I warn thee yet to tell thy griefs
In terms becoming majesty to hear :
I warn thee thus because I know thy temper
Is insolent and haughty to superiors :
How often hast thou braved my peaceful court,
Filled it with noisy brawls and windy boasts ;
And, with past service, nauseously repeated,
Reproached even me thy prince !

Dor. And well I might when you forgot reward,
The part of Heaven in kings : for punishment
Is hangman's work, and drudgery for devils.
I must and will reproach thee with my service :

Tyrant ! it irks me so to call my prince,
But just resentment and hard usage coined
Th' unwilling word : and, grating as it is,
Take it, for 'tis thy due.

Seb.

How ! tyrant !

Dor.

Tyrant !

Seb. Traitor ! *that* name thou canst not echo back ;
That robe of infamy, that circumcision
Ill hid beneath that robe, proclaim the traitor :
And, if a name
More foul than traitor be 'tis renegade.

Dor. If I'm a traitor, think, and blush, thou tyrant
Whose injuries betrayed me into treason,
Effaced my loyalty, unhinged my faith,
And hurried me from hopes of heaven to hell ;
All these, and all my yet unfinished crimes,
When I shall rise to plead before the saints,
I charge on thee to make thy damning sure.

Seb. Thy old presumptuous arrogance and gain,
That bred my first dislike and then my loathing !
Once more be warned and know me for thy king.

Dor. Too well I know thee, but for king no more :
This is not Lisbon, not the circle this
Where like a statue thou hast stood besieged
By sycophants, and fools, the growth of courts :
Where thy gulled eye in all the gaudy round
Met nothing but a lie in every face,
And the gross flattery of a gaping crowd,
Envious who first should catch and first applaud
The stuff of royal nonsense : when I spoke
My honest homely words were carped and censured
For want of courtly style : related actions,
Though modestly reported, passed for boasts :
Secure of merit, if I asked reward,
Thy hungry minions thought their rights invaded,
And the bread snatched from pimps and parasites.

CHAPTER XXIII.

DRYDEN'S CONTEMPORARIES—THE POETS (c. 1660—1700).

EXCLUDING from this chapter all treatment of the writings of Milton, Herrick, Cowley, Waller, and some others whose work is more properly treated in connection with the period immediately before 1660,¹ and omitting writers such as Prior, Garth, Addison, and others whose work it is more appropriate to defer till we reach the section that deals with the age in which most of it was done, we find no great names, and not many considerable ones, among the verse writers contemporary with Dryden.

Satire and essay-writing in verse are the most frequent productions of the poets of this age. First Samuel Butler, 1612—1680. among them in point of time and chief among them in importance is Butler, the author of 'Hudibras.' Of his life little is known, though it seems to be agreed that the success of his work brought him little profit in spite of its immense popularity, and that he died in straitened circumstances. 'He asked for bread, and he received a stone,' says Wesley at the time when a monument was being erected to the poet's memory. The first instalment of 'Hudibras' appeared in 1663; it was continued in 1664 and 1678, and was left unfinished. It is a long and very witty mock epic levelled against the Puritans. Its hero, Hudibras (Sir Samuel Luke, a Presbyterian justice of the peace, in whose household Butler seems to have passed some unhappy years), sets out, like another Don Quixote, with his Sancho Panza (Squire Ralpho), to tilt against the wickedness of the times. The whole force of the satirist's

¹ See ch. xviii., xx.

power is devoted to holding up to ridicule the anti-Royalist party. The chief of its former leaders (Cromwell, Fleetwood, Prynne, etc.) appear by name, and scores of others are alluded to under various titles. The metre of 'Hudibras' is octosyllabic, and many of his verses (mostly misquoted) have become common property—*e.g.* :

'He that runs may fight again,
Which he can never do that's slain ;'

or—

'He that complies against his will,
Is of his own opinion still.'

But, except for certain telling couplets, 'Hudibras' is now practically unknown. This had become the case even in Johnson's time, who himself supplies one of the reasons for this. 'Human works are not easily found without a perishable part,' and what made the chief excellence of 'Hudibras' in its day was precisely that 'perishable part.' 'The manners,' as Johnson says, 'are temporary and local, and therefore become every day less intelligible, and less striking. . . . Such manners as depend upon standing relations and general passions are co-extended with the race of man ; but those modifications of life and peculiarities of practice, which are the progeny of error and perverseness, or at best of some accidental influence or transient persuasion, must perish with their parents. Much therefore of that humour which transported the last [*i.e.* 17th] century with merriment is lost to us, who do not know the same solemnity, the sullen superstition, the gloomy moroseness, and the stubborn scruples, of the ancient Puritans ; or, if we know them, derive our information only from books, or from tradition, have never had them before our eyes, and cannot, but by recollection and study, understand the lines in which they are satirised.' 'Not even though another Butler should arise,' he adds elsewhere, 'would another "Hudibras" obtain the same regard. Burlesque consists in a disproportion between the style and the sentiments, or between the adventitious sentiments and the fundamental subject. It, therefore, like all bodies composed of heterogeneous parts, contains in it a principle of corruption. All disproportion is unnatural ; and from what is unnatural we can derive

only the pleasure which novelty produces. We admire it awhile as a strange thing ; but when it is no longer strange, we perceive its deformity. It is a kind of sacrifice, which by frequent repetition detects itself ; and the reader, learning in time what he is to expect, lays down the book, as the spectator turns away from a second exhibition of those tricks of which the only use is to show that they can be played.'

A few lines from the lengthy description of the hero, when first he set out 'a-colonelling,' will give the reader some idea of Butler's style :—

' For his religion it was fit
To match his learning and his wit ;
'Twas presbyterian true-blue ;
For he was of that stubborn crew
Of errant saints, whom all men grant
To be the true church militant ;
Such as do build their faith upon
The holy text of pike and gun ;
Decide all controversies by
Infallible artillery ;
And prove their doctrine orthodox
By apostolic blows and knocks ;
Call fire, and sword, and desolation,
A godly, thorough reformation,
Which always must be carried on,
And still be doing, never done ;
As if religion were intended
For nothing else but to be mended :
A sect whose chief devotion lies
In odd perverse antipathies ;
In falling out with that or this,
And finding somewhat still amiss ;
More peevish, cross, and splenetic
Than dog distract or monkey sick ;
That with more care keep holy-day
The wrong, than others the right way ;
Compound for sins they are inclined to,
By damning those they have no mind to.'

As an example of his witty sarcasm in dialogue, we take the following from the third part of the poem :—

' Quoth he, " I am resolved to be
Thy scholar in this mystery ;'

¹ It is a fiend who is asking the questions of the knight.

And therefore first desire to know
 Some principles on which you go—
 What makes a knave a child of God
 And one of us ?—"A livelihood."
 "What renders beating out of brains,
 And murder, godliness ?"—"Great gains."
 "What's tender conscience ?"—"'Tis a botch
 That will not bear the gentlest touch ;
 But, breaking out, dispatches more
 Than th' epidemical'st plague-sore."
 "What makes you encroach upon our trade
 And damn all others ?"—"To be paid."
 "What's orthodox and true believing
 Against a conscience ?"—"A good living."
 "What makes rebelling against kings
 A good old cause ?"—"Administerings."
 "What makes all doctrines plain and clear ?"
 "About two hundred pounds a year."
 "And that which was proved true before,
 Prove false again ?"—"Two hundred more."
 "And what makes breaking of all oaths
 A holy duty ?"—"Food and clothes."
 "What laws and freedom, persecution ?"
 "Being out of power and contribution."
 "What makes a church a den of thieves ?"
 "A dean and chapter, and white sleeves."
 "And what would serve, if these were gone,
 To make it orthodox ?"—"Our own."

Witty, incisive, and full of force as every line is, perhaps the reader will see even from these extracts the justice of a great part of Johnson's criticism, and he will realise with no great difficulty that a poem consisting of many thousand lines, mainly describing moods and conversation and dealing little with adventure, becomes wearisome at length, even though the staple of it is as ingeniously satirical as the passage quoted. Butler's other poems are not of great account. His 'Elephant in the Moon' is a satire on the wise men of the Royal Society. According to the satirist, one of their number, looking through a telescope, perceives an elephant in the moon, which turns out to be a mouse that has managed to creep into the instrument. It is curious that it was first written in Butler's Hudibrastic metre, and then re-written in 'long verse' (i.e., decasyllabic). The satire on our 'Ridiculous Imitation of the French' is chiefly interesting for its account of the fashion it rails at

—the rage for copying in all things from our neighbours across the Channel, which prevailed after the Restoration. His prose 'Characters' are perhaps worthier of attention than anything else he wrote, except 'Hudibras': they are carefully written essays which only remind us of Overbury and Earle in their titles and certain formal characteristics. They are longer and rather more elaborate than anything of the kind that had been done before, and they show Butler's command of a sturdy prose which is of the new order in its main essentials yet has leanings to the old. Here is the beginning of the description of a 'Character' that attracted him greatly:—

'A LEADER OF A FACTION sets the psalm, and all his party sing after him. He is like a figure in arithmetic, the more ciphers he stands before, the more his value amounts to. He is a great haranguer, talks himself into authority, and, like a parrot, climbs with his beak. He appears brave in the head of his party, but braver in his own; for vainglory leads him as he does them,—and both many times out of the king's highway, over hedges and ditches, to find out byways and shorter cuts, which generally prove the furthest about, but never the nearest home again. He is so passionate a lover of the liberty of the people, that his fondness turns to jealousy; he interprets every trifle in the worst sense to the prejudice of her honesty, and is so full of caprices and scruples, that if he had his will, he would have her shut up and never suffered to go abroad again, if not made away, for her incontinence.'

A word or two may be conveniently said here about Andrew Marvell's satires. This last of the Puritan poets, who had been Milton's colleague in the Latin secretaryship, remained in political life after the Restoration, as member for Hull. 'A Roman patriot incorruptible and inflexible in the corrupt and servile Parliaments of Charles II.,' he has been called by Mr. Goldwin Smith; 'the poems of his later days were not epics or lyrics, but satires levelled, like his renowned pamphlets, against tyranny and wickedness in Church and State.' His metrical productions which fall within the scope of this chapter are, among other satirical pieces, 'Flecknoe,' 'Last Instructions to a Painter,' 'The Character of Holland'; these are in the heroic distich, and may be said to be the forerunners of the satires of Oldham, Dryden, and Defoe. They have no great intrinsic merit, and the versification is clumsy and

rough; but they were effective enough and sufficiently vigorous. Marvell died in the midst of a fierce and bitter No-Popery controversy with Parker, Bishop of Oxford, and there was some suspicion that he had been poisoned. It was in this feud that he wrote one of the most famous of his prose works, 'The Rehearsal Transposed.'¹ The Flecknoe who figures in the satires mentioned above, has had a dreary immortality conferred upon his name by Dryden, who gave his chief butt the name of MacFlecknoe [*i.e.*, son of Flecknoe] as his proudest title to the throne of dulness. He was a voluminous writer of poor poems, plays, and prose: a brief extract from Marvell's satire upon him will give us a fair specimen of his work in this vein:—

'Obliged by frequent visits of this man,
Whom as priest, poet, and musician,
I for some branch o' Melchisedek took,
(Though he derives *his* self from my Lord Brooke)
I sought his lodging, which is at the sign
Of the sad Pelican,—subject divine
For poetry: there, three stair-cases high,
Which signifies his triple property,
I found at last a chamber, as 'twas said,
But seemed a coffin set on the stair's head;

* * * * *

Straight, without farther information,
In hideous voice, he, in a dismal tone,
Begins to exorcise, as if I were
Possessed,—and sure the devil brought me there.
But I, who now imagined myself brought
To my last trial, in a serious thought
Calmed the disorders of my youthful breast,
And to my martyrdom prepared rest.
Only this frail ambition did remain,
The last distemper of the sober brain,
That there had been some present to assure
The future ages how I did endure;
And how I, silent, turned one burning ear
Towards the verse, and when that could not bear.
Held him the other, and unchanged yet,
Asked still for more and prayed him to repeat;
Till the tyrant, weary to persecute,
Left off, and tried to allure me with his lute.'

¹ The title was, of course, borrowed from Buckingham's play (pp 367, 377); Parker is made to figure as Mr. Bayes.

Oldham's claim to remembrance rests not on his 'Praise of Homer,' or on his 'Pindaric Odes,' but on the 'Satires against the Jesuits.' Dryden, who John Oldham: 1659-53. edited his 'Remains' in 1684, and lavished his praises upon him, doubtless learned much from the vigorous satirist. Like Marvell, he wrote in the heroic distich (which, indeed, had become, and has remained, the general vehicle for metrical satire); but though he far surpasses any previous satirical writer of our tongue, his versification is slipshod and careless. His life was short and sad. On leaving the University he took to teaching; gave it up after a few years for literature; published without a patron; and died, after a storm-tossed, unsatisfied life, in poverty and neglect at the age of thirty. He has been called 'the laureate of the Popish Plot frenzy,' and it has been truly said of him that 'his laurels are accordingly stained with much mire and much blood'; but the *saera indignatio* of the genuine satirist is there, and the vivacity and strength with which he expresses it have given him a certain sure place in our literature, in spite of his many deficiencies. The stock quotation from his works, the passage describing the servitude of the domestic chaplain in his days, shows him to great advantage. The account of the teacher's lot, immediately preceding it, is not less interesting and vivid:—

'If you for orders and a gown design,
Consider only this, dear friend of mine,
'The church is grown so overstocked of late,
That if you walk abroad, you'll hardly meet
More porters now than parsons in the street.
At every corner they are forced to ply
For jobs of hawking divinity;
And half the number of the sacred herd
Are fain to stroll and wander unpreferred.

If thus, or thoughts of such a weighty charge,
Make you resolve to keep yourself at large,
For want of better opportunity
A school must next your sanctuary be.
Go, wed some grammar-bridewell, and a wife,
And there beat Greek and Latin for your life;
With birchen sceptre there command at will,
Greater than Bnsby's self or Doctor Gill;
But who would be to the vile drudgery bound.
Where there so small encouragement is found,

Where you, for recompense of all your pains,
 Shall hardly reach a common fiddler's gains?
 For when you've toiled and laboured all you can,
 To dung and cultivate a barren brain,
 A dancing master shall be better paid,
 Though he instructs the heels, and you the head.
 To such indulgence are kind parents grown,
 That nought costs less in breeding than a son;
 Nor is it hard to find a father now,
 Shall more upon a setting-dog allow,
 And with a freer hand reward the care
 Of training up his spaniel than his heir.'

His connection with Dryden is nearly all that preserves the memory of John Sheffield, Earl of Mulgrave, and afterwards Duke of Buckinghamshire, the Lord Mulgrave, 1649—1721. 'sharp-judging Adriel, the Muses' friend' of 'Absalom and Achitophel.' Besides the 'Essay on Satire' which he wrote in conjunction with Dryden, and for which Dryden was 'praised and beaten,' he produced an 'Essay on Poetry' and some smaller poems. His criticisms in verse Dryden eulogised extravagantly, and Pope thought very highly of them: he certainly handles the couplet neatly, and in a fashion which was not so common as it became a little later, but his thoughts are commonplace and his way of expressing them dull and uninspiring. The cleverest and sprightliest of his writing is an amusing set of satirical verses on the 'Election of a Laureate' at the death of Rowe (1718).

To the same group of writers as Mulgrave belongs Wentworth Dillon, Earl of Roscommon. He, too, did literary criticism in correct iambics, producing an Lord Roscommon, 1634-84. 'Essay on Translated Verse,' with Horace and Boileau as his masters. He looked forward to the happy time when English poetry would be a good deal more 'correct,' its native barbarisms satisfactorily expelled, and the newly discovered decencies of common-sense, control, and regularity of workmanship properly acclimatised:—

'O may I live to hail the glorious day,
 And sing loud peans through the crowded way,
 When in triumphant state the British Muse,
 True to herself, shall barbarous aid refuse,
 And in the Roman majesty appear,
 Which none knows better, and none comes so near.'

He meant very well evidently, but his talent was of the smallest; yet he and others like him did something for Dryden, something to smooth the way for Pope, and are not altogether to be disregarded because of the littleness of their poetic achievement and the absence of anything like genuine poetry from their works. Roscommon is, moreover, interesting as having essayed blank verse in his translation of Horace's 'Ars Poetica.' It is the only poem written in that metre between the death of Milton and the end of the seventeenth century; and perhaps no poem of its length exhibits such an absolutely incompetent handling of blank verse.

Another lordly poet, also connected with Dryden, is Charles Sackville, Earl of Dorset, the Eugenius of Lord Dorset, 1687—1706. the 'Essay on Dramatic Poesic,' and a descendant of the poet Sackville of Queen Elizabeth's days. He, too, tried the satirical vein; but it is as a writer of lyrics which form a sort of link between Suckling and the Cavalier poets on the one hand, and Gay and Prior on the other, that he is most worthy of notice. His witty ballad 'To all you Ladies now on Land' is now almost his only composition that is remembered; it was written at sea in the Dutch War of 1665, and begins thus:—

'To all you ladies now on land,
 We men at sea indite;
 But first would have you understand
 How hard it is to write;
 The Muses now and Neptune too
 We must implore to write to you,
 With a fa la la la la.

'For though the Muses should prove kind,
 And fill our empty brain;
 Yet if rough Neptune rouse the wind,
 To wave the azure main,
 Our paper, pen, and ink, and we,
 Roll up and down our ships at sea
 With a fa la la la la.

'Then if we write not by each post,
 Think not we are unkind;
 Nor yet conclude our ships are lost
 By Dutchmen or by wind:
 Our tears we'll send a speedier way,
 The tide shall bring them twice a day
 With a fa la la la la.'

To conclude this account of the Court group we have a word for John Wilmot, Earl of Rochester, a Lord
Rochester, 1647-80. man of infamous character and considerable talent and wit. His verses 'On Nothing,' and his mock epitaph on King Charles II., are the best known of his productions. The latter runs thus:—

' Here lies our sovereign lord the king,
 Whose word no man relies on—
 Who never said a foolish thing,
 And never did a wise one.'

He tried his hand on an adaptation of a play by Beaumont and Fletcher ('Valentinian'), and wrote satires not now worthy of note. Johnson credits his writings with 'sprightliness and vigour,' but observes, with his usual sense, that 'there is no particular character in them.' It is a remark that would apply with equal justice to most of the minor verse-writing of that age.

Tate, Dryden's assistant, succeeded Shadwell, Dryden's foe, in the Laureateship in 1692. He wrote
Nahum Tate, 1652-1715. various poems and plays, now of no account; the only work he is remembered by is his share in the second part of 'Absalom and Achitophel.' No doubt the wit and satire were all Dryden's suggestion, but Tate seems to have learned Dryden's versification much as Fenton and Broome afterwards did Pope's. In conjunction with one Nicholas Brady, Tate executed an unpoetical metrical version of the Psalms, which still survives.

CHAPTER XXIV.

DRYDEN'S CONTEMPORARIES.—THE DRAMATISTS (TO ABOUT 1714).

DAVENANT, who is said to have been related to Shakespeare, and who was one of Ben Jonson's adopted 'sons,'
Sir William Davenant, 1605-68. succeeded the latter poet in the Laureateship.

His works belong for the most part to the pre-Restoration period,¹ but two or three of his plays after that date deserve some notice. The 'Siege of Rhodes' was written and produced before the Restoration, for towards the close of Cromwell's rule Davenant had managed to get his 'operas' (*i.e.* plays with music) semi-privately acted; it was revived and added to, and was one of the first plays acted on the reopening of the playhouses. It has no great merit, in spite of the praise Dryden has lavished upon it for its use of rhymed verse; and for that matter none of Davenant's work, though highly valued in its day, is of much account. Two others of his plays (both comedies), 'The Playhouse to be Let' and 'The Man's the Master,' were the product of his declining years. Though his work is of no intrinsic value, its historical position makes its author of some interest. He is the first, in point of time, of the Restoration playwrights, and he forms a sort of slight bond between them and the men of the earlier period. There are two or three other of the earliest (and otherwise unimportant Restoration dramatists) whose names are just

¹ See p. 262, note.

worth mentioning here. One of these is Sir William Killigrew (1693), the author of 'The Siege of Urbin,' 'The Killigrews.' 'Selindra,' and several other plays. His brother Thomas Killigrew was more famous for his jests in speech and action than for anything in his several plays. He accompanied the king in his exile, earned the name of Court jester, and figures in Denham's epigram:

'Had Cowley ne'er spoke, Killigrew ne'er writ,
Combined in one, they'd made a matchless wit.'

From this it may be inferred—and the inference will be correct—that his plays are dull. 'Claricilla,' 'Bellamira's Dream,' and 'The Prisoners' are among his tragi-comedies.

Tuke. Sir Samuel Tuke and Sir R. Fanshawe are two
Fanshawe. courtier playwrights of little merit who are worth mentioning here as evidence of the popularity and influence of the Spanish drama in the years immediately following the Restoration. Fanshawe, who was ambassador at Madrid (d. 1666), translated two plays of Antonio de Mendoza: Tuke (d. 1673) adapted a play of Calderon's for the English stage as early as 1662 under the title of 'The Adventures of Five Hours.'¹ To Roger

Orrery. Boyle, Earl of Orrery, belongs the 'credit' (according to Dryden) of setting the example of writing dramas in rhymed verse, and teaching us the way to write 'heroic' plays on the French model. It was Dryden himself, of course, who stamped this new phase of our drama with his own great authority.

Lee, whose name has already been mentioned as a coadjutor of Dryden, was a tragic writer of real imagination and considerable power of appealing to the emotions. He began life as an actor, but failing on the stage, produced his first play 'Nero,' a

¹ The extent of the Spanish influence may be roughly gauged by the following particulars furnished in a note of Professor Ward's: 'Dryden's "The Wild Gallant," and "The Rival Ladies," and doubtless also Lord Orrery's "Guzman" were from Spanish sources: Thomas Killigrew's "The Parson's Wedding" (acted 1664) was taken from Calderon's "Donna Duende"; of Crowne's "Sir Courtly Nice" the plot had been suggested to him by King Charles II. from Moreto: Wycherly owed the most amusing scenes of his "The Gentleman Dancing-Master" to Calderon's "El Maestro de Danzar"; Dryden's "An Evening's Love" came only indirectly from Calderon through Thomas Corneille; Steele's "The Lying Lover" similarly from Alarcon; Mrs. Centlivre took her "Perplexed Lovers," and probably also one or two other of her comedies, from a Spanish source; Colley Cibber's "She Would and She Would Not" derived its plot from . . . a play of Spanish extraction.'

melodramatic tragedy in rhyme, at the age of twenty. Dryden was his model and master as well as his colleague; his best plays, 'The Rival Queens' and 'Brutus,' are bombastic and turgid, but there is much poetry in them. He died at the age of thirty-seven in a madhouse.

Otway's best and most enduring work is undoubtedly his tragedy of 'Venice Preserved,' which, together with 'The Orphan,' gives him a claim to a high place among English dramatists, and a right to be regarded as second to none of his age in pure poetry. He resembles Lee among his contemporaries in his life, and to some extent in his work, and there is something in each (but mainly perhaps in mere biographical accidents) that reminds us of Marlowe. Like Lee, Otway was an unsuccessful actor, and an imaginative and successful playwright. Like Lee, too, he died in wretchedness—and, it is said, starved—at an early age. Part of a scene in Otway's moving blank verse (from 'Venice Preserved') may be found room for here:

Priuli. Don't talk thus.
Belvidera [*his daughter*]. Yes, I must; and you must hear too.
I have a husband.

Pri. Damn him.

Bel. Oh, do not curse him;
He would not speak so hard a word towards you
On any terms, howe'er he deals with me.

Pri. Ha! what means my child?

Bel. Oh! there's but this short moment
'Twixt me and fate: yet send me not with curses
Down to my grave; afford me one kind blessing
Before we part; just take me in your arms,
And recommend me with a prayer to heaven,
That I may die in peace; and when I am dead—

(*Pri.* How my soul's catch'd!)

Bel. Lay me, I beg you, lay me
By the dear ashes of my tender mother.
She would have pitied me, had fate yet spared her.

Pri. By Heaven, my aching heart forebodes much mischief
Tell me thy story, for I'm still thy father.

Bel. No; I'm contented.

Pri. Speak!

Bel. No matter.

Pri. Tell me:

By yon blessed Heaven, my heart runs o'er with fondness!

Bel. Oh !

Pri. Utter it !

Bel. Oh ! my husband, my dear husband,
Carries a dagger in his once kind bosom,
To pierce the heart of your poor Belvidera !

Pri. Kill thee !

Bel. Yes, kill me. When he passed his faith
And covenant against your state and senate,
He gave me up a hostage for his truth :
With me a dagger and a dire commission
Whene'er he failed, to plunge it through this bosom !
I learnt the danger, chose the hour of love
To attempt his heart, and bring it back to honour.
Great love prevailed, and blest me with success !
He came, confessed, betrayed his dearest friends
For promised mercy. Now they are doomed to suffer,
Galled with remembrance of what then was sworn,
If they are lost, he vows to appease the gods
With this poor life, and make my blood the atonement !

Pri. Heavens !

Bel. Think you saw what passed at our last parting :
Think you beheld him like a raging lion,
Pacing the earth, and tearing up his steps,
Fate in his eyes and roaring with the pain
Of burning fury : think you saw his one hand
Fixed on my throat, whilst the extended other
Grasped a keen threatening dagger. Oh ! 'twas thus
We last embraced, when, trembling with revenge,
He dragged me to the ground, and at my bosom
Presented horrid death. Cried out, ' My friends ! [loved,
Where are my friends ? ' Swore, wept, raved, threatened,
(For yet he loved,) and that dear love preserved me
To this last wish of a loved father's pity.
I fear not death ; but cannot bear the thought,
That that dear hand should do the unfriendly office.
If I was ever then your care, now hear me ;
Fly to the senate, save the promised lives
Of his dear friends, ere mine be made the sacrifice.

Pri. Oh, my heart's comfort !

Bel. Will you not, my father ?

Weep not, but answer me !

Pri. By Heaven I will.

Not one of them but what shall be immortal.
Can thou forgive me all my follies past ?
I'll henceforth be indeed a father ; never,
Never more thus expose, but cherish thee,
Dear as the vital warmth that feeds my life,
Dear as these eyes that weep in fondness o'er thee :
Peace to thy heart ! Farewell.

Bel.

Go, and remember,

'Tis Belvidera's life her father pleads for.

To conclude our account of that group of romantic and often bombastic play-writers, among whom are ^{Thomas} Southerne: to be numbered Davenant, Dryden, Lee, and 1650—1746. Otway, we have to say something of Southerne and Rowe. The first of these had, as we have seen, some part in Dryden's 'Cleomenes.' Among his other plays are 'The Loyal Brother; or, The Persian Prince' (1682); 'The Fatal Marriage' (1694), and 'Oronooko' (1696). This last play—a blank-verse tragedy in the manner of Otway rather than of Shakespeare—is founded on Mrs. Behn's¹ tale of the same name.

Rowe is the author of a number of sentimental blank-verse plays, some of which (notably 'The Fair Penitent,' founded on Massinger's 'Fatal Dowry,' ^{Nicholas} Rowe: 1673—1718. 1703; 'The Royal Convert,' 1708; and 'Jane Shore,' 1713) were very successful at the time of their production, and for a long while after it. He deserves credit for his edition of Shakespeare, whom he greatly admired, but has not much in his own works to greatly commend him. It may interest the reader to know that 'gay Lothario' was Rowe's creation (in 'The Fair Penitent'). After the accession of George I. he succeeded Tate as Laureate. 'In dramatic power as exhibiting itself in characterisation,' says Professor Ward, 'he cannot be said to have excelled. Of a genuine poetic touch he shows few signs. These plays are still occupied almost entirely with themes of "heroic love"; all is made to turn on this pivot, whatever other passions may be nominally brought into play. In the invention of situations exciting terror or pity Rowe is fertile and skilful; he is fond of night-scenes, and of all the outward machinery of awe and gloom. But he rarely displays any natural force, even in his most effective moments, and is wanting in passion or in elevation

¹ Aphra Behn also wrote many plays besides her tales and poems. Among the former are 'The Forced Marriage,' 'The City Heiress,' 'The Roundheads,' 'The Young King,' etc. She was a very prolific writer, and not without talent, but her works are, for the most part, extremely indelicate and immoral. With Aphra Behn in the group of licentious female playwrights, we may bracket Susanna Centlivre (1678—1722) and Mrs. Manley (d. 1724).

where his theme seems to demand the one or the other. His most distinctive and most praiseworthy feature is the greater degree of refinement to which in expression, if not in sentiment, he has attained. Rowe is indeed far from being an English Racine; his style is too tame to merit the praise of dignity; but he shows a desire for decency, and is at all events never gross.

It remains for us now to consider the works of those who are known as 'The Restoration Comic Dramatists,' *par excellence*; that is to say, of the writers of the prose comedies of manners who flourished between the accession of Charles II. and the death of Queen Anne. Of these the chief are Wycherley, whose work belongs to the latter part of the reign of Charles; Congreve and Vanbrugh, whose writings were in the reign of William III.; and Farquhar, whose plays appeared in the latter part of William's reign and the first half of Queen Anne's. Before dealing with these we will give a few lines to Etherege and Sedley.

Etherege was the author of three comedies, of which the first, 'Love in a Tub,' was written in 1661; the second, 'She Would if She Could,' in 1668; and the last, 'The Man of Mode; or, Sir Fopling Flutter,' was published in 1676, but must have been acted earlier. These plays, like the majority of those which we shall now have to consider, are witty, but immoral and indelicate. 'I allow it to be nature,' says Steele of 'Sir Fopling Flutter'; 'but it is nature in its utmost corruption and degeneracy.'

Sedley (like Etherege, Buckingham, Dorset, and Rochester) is another of the courtier writers. He wrote a tragedy on the subject of 'Antony and Cleopatra' (1667), and several comedies, of which 'The Mulberry Garden' (1668) and 'Bellamira' (1687) are considered to be the best. He is the Lisideius of Dryden's 'Essay of Dramatic Poesie.'

Wycherley's four plays appeared in the years 1672-77, though he himself (a not very trustworthy authority) declared that two at least of them were written in his youth. The names of his works are 'Love in a Wood' (1672), 'The Gentleman

Sir George
Etherege:
1630-91.

Sir Charles
Sedley:
1629-1715.

William
Wycherley,
1610-1715.

Dancing-Master (1673), *The Country Wife* (1675), and *The Plain Dealer* (1677), on the two last of which his reputation chiefly rests. The criticism of Steele, quoted with regard to *Etherege*, will perhaps apply with more force to the author of *The Country Wife*. In satire he was the equal of any of his school, and in grossness he excels them all. His characteristics have been thus summed up by Professor Ward: 'His wit is less sparkling and spontaneous than that of Congreve or of Vanbrugh; he is, as Leigh Hunt says, somewhat heavy as well as brawny in his step, and he lacks in general the gaiety of spirit which is the most charming phase of comic humour. His sarcasms are as keen as they are cruel, and the cynicism of his wit cannot prevent us from acknowledging its power. But while he ruthlessly uncloaks the vices of his age, his own moral tone is affected by their influence to as deplorable a degree as that of the most light-hearted and unthinking of contemporary dramatists.'

Congreve is admittedly the wittiest of the prose-comedy writers of his day, and perhaps of all English playwrights. He exhibits to a marked extent the best qualities of his school, while his work, though quite as immoral, is less coarse than that of most of his fellows. Of his four comedies, *The Old Bachelor* was produced when he was twenty-three years old, and at once made the reputation of his author; *The Double Dealer* followed next year; and to the year after that (1695) belongs the *Love for Love*. In 1697 he wrote a blank-verse tragedy, *The Mourning Bride*, which is stately and dignified, but has little poetic merit. He returned to comedy in 1700, when his last play, *The Way of the World*, made its appearance. 'Congreve,' says Professor Ward, 'possessed a real power of drawing character as well as of constructing plots; and it seems to me an exaggeration to regard the brilliancy of his dialogue as his solitary merit, or as one which not only outshone, but, as the phrase is, "killed" the other qualities requisite in a comic dramatist. Moreover, the graceful ease of his dialogue is almost as noteworthy as its wittiness. In the latter respect he is the superior of all his predecessors and contemporaries of the

William
Congreve:
1670-1729.

post-Restoration period, among whom Dryden and perhaps Vanbrugh alone approached him, and Sheridan is his only successor. In ease of style he far surpasses Wycherley; Vanbrugh, and still more Farquhar, lack the element of grace which he possesses; while Etherege and the rest—even Dryden—fall short of him in polish as writers of comic prose.¹

Vanbrugh's best plays belong to the years 1697-98, when he produced 'The Relapse,' 'The Provoked Wife,'
Sir John he produced 'The Relapse,' 'The Provoked Wife,'
 Vanbrugh: and 'Æsop.' Later on he wrote, among other
 1666-1726. comedies, 'The Confederacy,' 'The False Friend,'
 and was at work on 'The Provoked Husband,' a sequel to his 'Provoked Wife,' at the time of his death.¹

With the sprightly, vigorous plays of Farquhar our survey of the drama closes. Like Lee, Otway,
George survey of the drama closes. Like Lee, Otway,
 Farquhar: and Cibber, he tried acting as well as writing,
 1678-1707. and like the first two, soon abandoned the pro-
 fession. His first play, 'Love and a Bottle,' was written at the age of twenty, and was followed (in 1700) by 'The Constant Couple.' 'Sir Harry Wildair,' which takes its name from a character in 'The Constant Couple,' appeared next year. 'The Twin Rivals,' 'The Recruiting Officer,' and 'The Beaux' Stratagem' belong to the three last years of his life. His plays are full of animal spirits, of real humour and fine manly feeling. Had he not been cut short in his early manhood, he would probably have earned a higher, if not the highest, place in the literature of his time. As it is, he has been called 'the Fielding of the drama,' and though, of course, he takes no such rank in dramatic literature as Fielding does in prose, yet there is a certain affinity between their minds—humour of a kind which is humour not because of, but in spite of, its coarseness, generosity and vigorous strength and scorn of hypocrisy—which may in some degree justify that title.

¹ This play was finished by the actor-p'aywright, Colley Cibber (1671-1757), the author of 'Love's Last Shift; or, The Fool in Fashion' (1696), to which Vanbrugh's 'Relapse' was a sequel. Among Cibber's other comedies the best are 'Woman's Wit' and 'The Careless Husband.'

CHAPTER XXV.

DRYDEN'S CONTEMPORARIES.—THE PROSE.

COWLEY'S work as a prose-writer mainly appeared after the Restoration; and it will be remembered that in our account of it, in connection with his poems, we called attention to the fact that he is one of the first of the new school of elegant yet strong and direct wielders of literary prose. For the best examples of this his 'Essays' should be referred to; but his 'Proposition for the Advancement of Experimental Philosophy' has, however, another and a peculiar interest of its own as connecting the poet with the tendency of the age to examine into the physical and material reasons of things, which had, as one of its results, the establishment of the Royal Society. Of this it may be well to give a brief account here.

The Royal Society, founded 1662. Physical and Mathematic Science which had sprung up during the seventeenth century. Dr. Wilkins, its founder (afterwards Bishop of Chester), had written his fantastic 'Discovery of a New World' and his 'Discourse'—tending to prove that it is probable our earth is one of the planets—during the reign of Charles I. After the Restoration his chief work is a cumbrous, dull treatise on a philosophical language which he invented, and on the principles and duties of natural religion. Cowley, who had studied medicine and botany in England under the Commonwealth, produced his 'Plantarum Libri duo' in 1662. Sprat, who wrote the 'History of the Royal Society' in good prose, was one of its early members. This Sprat wrote poems (of no great account) on 'The Death of Cromwell,' 'The

Plague of Athens,' 'The Death of Mr. Cowley,' etc., and became Bishop of Rochester: his prose includes some 'Sermons,' which have been highly praised. Butler's name connects itself with the Society by his ridicule of its proceedings; while Dryden, Denham, Waller, Wren, Evelyn, Barrow, Wallis, Newton, Ray, Boyle, and many other distinguished men of the age are ranked among its members. Concerning three or four of these names, a few words may

Isaac Barrow, be in place here. Barrow gained great fame in science as a mathematician, and has left a large

amount of writing in Latin on geometry. His chief English works are a number of sermons. He was succeeded in his professorship at Gresham College by Sir Isaac Newton, the

greatest of English mathematicians, who also used Latin in his chief works: the epoch-making 'Principia' appeared in 1687. Another mathe-

matician is the Wallis mentioned above, a man of wit as well as learning, as he showed in his controversy with Hobbes over the squaring of the circle.

Ray was long the chief of our botanists. His principal

work is a 'History of Plants' written in Latin: he used English, however, in his metaphysical

writings—e.g. 'The Wisdom of God manifested in Creation' and 'Physico-Theological Discourses concerning Chaos, the Deluge, and the Dissolution of the World.' The Hon. Robert Boyle has obtained a sort of limited immortality by

the fact that his name is preserved in the principle in physics sometimes known as 'Boyle's

Law': he is also perpetuated in the Boyle lectures founded for 'the defence of natural and revealed religion.' He was a somewhat voluminous writer on scientific and semi-scientific subjects; and among the more notable of his writings are 'Physiological Essays,' 'A Letter on Seraphic Love,' 'The Usefulness of Experimental Natural Philosophy,' and 'Occasional Reflections upon Several Subjects.' It is one of these last which Swift parodied in his 'Meditations upon a Broomstick.' Evelyn was a voluminous and

learned writer who treated all manner of subjects, from 'Forest-Trees' ('Sylva,' 1664) to 'The Ladies' Dressing-Room' (or 'Mundus Muliebris,' 1690);

from 'A Discourse of the Earth' (or 'Terra,' 1675) to 'A Discourse of Sallets' (or 'Acetaria,' 1699). He wrote on gardening, fashions, engraving, medals, etc., in clear but not particularly brilliant prose. He was a scholar and a man of taste, but scarcely of much power. The work which he left that is of most importance to posterity will be found in his 'Diary,' a valuable record, begun before the writer had reached manhood and extending over more than half a century.

A more famous 'Diary' is that begun by Pepys in the Samuel Pepys, year of the Restoration, and carefully kept up
1682—1703. for more than nine years. Pepys was a clerk in the Admiralty, and, though of humble origin, moved among the fashionable and great world of the time. He wrote in cipher, evidently intending his criticisms on men and women, on plays and books and public events, his private accounts, his successes and disappointments, to be read by none but himself. He gossips to himself in a chatty, pleasant, self-complacent way, and has left us some most vivid pictures of the society of his times. The following specimen gives a good example of the way in which public and private concerns jostle one another in his vivacious pages:—

'23rd [Nov. 1663].—To St. Paul's Churchyard, and there bespoke "Rushworth's Collections" and "Scobell's Acts of the Long Parliament," etc., which I will make the King pay for as to the office, and so I do not break my vow at all. With Alderman Backewell, talking of the new money, which he says will never be counterfeited, he believes; but it so deadly inconvenient for telling, it is so thick, and the edges are made to turn up.

'25th.—To my Lord Sandwich, and there I did present him with Mr. Barlow's "Terella," with which he was very much pleased, and he did show me great kindness, and by other discourse I have reason to think that he is not at all, as I feared he would be, discontented against me.

'26th.—The plague, it seems, grows more and more at Amsterdam; and we are going upon making of all ships coming from thence and Hamburg, or any other infected places, to perform their quarantine for thirty days, as Sir Richard Browne expressed it in the order of the Council, contrary to the import of the word, though, in the general acceptation, it signifies now the thing, not the time spent in doing it, in Holehaven; a thing never done by us before.

'27th.—My wife mightily pleased with my discourse of getting a trip over to Calais, or some other part of France, the next summer,

in one of the yachts, and I believe I shall do it—and it makes good sport that my maid Jane dares not go; and Bessie is wild to go, and is mad for joy, but yet will be willing to stay, if Jane hath a mind.

'28th.—I met with Mr. Pierce, the surgeon, who tells me for good news that my Lord Sandwich is resolved to go no more to Chelsea, and told me he believed that I had been giving my Lord some counsel, which I neither denied nor affirmed. To St. Paul's Churchyard, and there looked upon the Second Part of "Hudibras," which I buy not, but borrow to read, to see if it be as good as the first, which the world cried so mightily up, though it hath not a good liking in me, though I had tried by twice or thrice reading to bring myself to think it witty. To-day, for certain, I am told how, in Holland, publicly they have pictured our king with reproach: one way is with his pockets turned the wrong side outward, hanging out empty; another, with two courtiers picking of his pockets; and a third, leading of two ladies, while others abuse him; which amounts to great contempt.

'29th (Lord's day).—This morning I put on my best black cloth suit trimmed with scarlet ribbon, very neat, with my cloak lined with velvet, and a new beaver, which altogether is very noble, with my black silk knit canons I bought a month ago.'

One of the accompaniments of the Restoration was a considerable increase in the number of the news-sheets and the appointment of Roger L'Estrange as licenser of the press in 1663. The newspaper press dates its rise from James I.'s reign, and it

The Press.

Sir Roger

L'Estrange,

1616-1701.

rapidly developed under Charles I. and the Commonwealth. Its connection with literature during this and the preceding period is not very close, though it tended to increase the demand for, and supply of, 'occasional' writing and essays. It is to the reign of Anne, and a little later, that we must turn to find some of the best writers of the age—*e.g.*, Defoe, Swift, Addison, Steele—devoting their energies to work for periodicals. L'Estrange himself is worth a word or two as a diligent journalist, compiler, and translator. He edited the 'London Gazette,' which exists as the official organ for Government announcements to this day; it was started in 1665, and was originally called the 'Oxford Gazette,' it being published in Oxford to supply news of the Court, which had migrated thither on account of the Plague. L'Estrange's best work is his version of Aesop's fables. He also translated Josephus, Cicero, Seneca, Erasmus, etc., and compiled a 'Brief History of the Times.'

Another minor translator and miscellaneous writer of

Walton. the time is Charles Cotton, whose chief claim

— to remembrance is his connection with Izaak

Cotton. Walton. Some of Walton's own work, it will

be remembered, was done after the Restoration (see above, p. 349); Cotton produced a second part of the 'Compleat Angler' in 1676. His other work includes translations from the French (Montaigne, Corneille, etc.), 'Virgile Travestie,' a 'Compleat Gamester,' and much else of little (or no) value.

Among the essayists of this age (if we exclude those we

Sir William have mentioned as belonging by the bulk of
Temple, their work to the eighteenth century), after
1628-99.

Dryden and Cowley, Temple is pre-eminent.

Perhaps from the point of view of manner alone—of elegance of style and expression—he stands above all his contemporaries. Temple had been our ambassador in Holland until the ascendancy of the Cabal Ministry, and published a series of 'Observations upon the United Provinces of the Netherlands.' This is not however the work upon which his literary fame rests; we shall seek for the justification of that chiefly in his 'Miscellanea,' a small collection of essays written at various times between 1680 and 1692.

The following is an extract from his reflections 'Upon the Excesses of Grief':—

'We bring into the world with us a poor needy uncertain life, short at the longest, and unquiet at its best. All the imaginations of the witty and the wise have been perpetually busied to find out the ways how to revive it with pleasures, or relieve it with diversions; how to compose it with ease, and settle it with safety. To some of these ends have been employed the institution of lawgivers, the reasonings of philosophers, the inventions of poets, the pains of labouring, and the extravagances of voluptuaries. All the world is perpetually at work about nothing else, but only that our poor mortal lives should pass the easier and happier for that little time we possess them, or else end the better when we lose them. Upon this occasion riches came to be coveted, honours to be esteemed, friendship and love to be pursued, and virtues themselves to be admired in the world. Now, Madam, is it not to bid defiance to all mankind, to condemn their universal opinions and designs, if instead of passing your life as well and easily, you resolve to pass it as ill and as miserably, as you can; you grow insensible to the convenience of riches, the delights of honour and praise, the charms of kindness

or friendship, nay to the observance or applause of virtues themselves? For who can you expect in these excesses of passion will allow you to show either temperance or fortitude, to be either prudent or just? And for your friends, I suppose, you reckon upon losing their kindness, when you have sufficiently convinced them they can never hope for any of yours, since you have none left for yourself or anything else. You declare upon all occasions you are incapable of receiving any comfort or pleasure in anything that is left in this world; and I assure you, Madam, none can ever love you that can have no hopes ever to please you.

'Among the several inquiries and endeavours after the happiness of life, the sensual men agree in pursuit of every pleasure they can start without regarding the pains of the chase, the weariness when it ends, or how little the quarry is worth: the busy and ambitious fall into the more lasting pursuits of power and riches; the speculative men prefer tranquillity of mind before the different motions of passion and appetite, or the common successions of desire and satiety, of pleasure and pain. But this may seem too dull a principle for the happiness of life which is ever in motion; and though passions are perhaps the stings without which they say no honey is made, yet I think all sorts of men have ever agreed they ought to be our servants and not our masters—to give us some agitation for entertainment or exercise, but never to throw our reason out of its seat. Perhaps I would not always sit still, or would be sometimes on horseback; but I would never ride a horse that galls my flesh, or shakes my bones, or that runs away with me as he pleases, so as I can neither stop it at river or precipice. Better no passions at all than have them too violent, or such a love as instead of heightening our pleasures affords us nothing but vexation and pain.'

Of Temple it has been said that his contributions to *John Locke*, knowledge and his influence on English thought *1692—1701*. were little, but that his services to literary art were very considerable. With Locke exactly the opposite is the case; the manner of his writings is of very little value to the student of letters, but as 'the founder of a school destined to influence all subsequent national thought,' we cannot pass him over without due attention.

Locke was educated at Westminster and Oxford (where he obtained a studentship at Christ Church), studied medicine there and abroad, came under the notice of Shaftesbury, who obtained for him a post in the Civil Service. At the fall of Shaftesbury (1682) Locke fell into disfavour, and was subsequently deprived of his office. After the Revolution he returned from Holland (1689), and was appointed successively Commissioner of Appeals and Com-

missioner of Trade, which latter post he held till within a few years of his death. His more important writings belong to the year of his return from Holland and the following one. To the year 1685 belongs his first letter concerning 'Toleration,' which was written in Latin and published in Holland. It was followed by a second letter (in English, 1690), and by a third (1692). The work which has established his fame as a philosopher, 'The Essay on the Human Understanding,' appeared in 1690, as did also the two treatises on 'Government' and 'Inspiration of the Holy Scriptures.' The 'Thoughts concerning Education' belong to the year 1693, and 'The Reasonableness of Christianity' to 1695.

Locke's 'epoch-making' work is undoubtedly the 'Essay on the Human Understanding,' which is divided into four books. The 'Essay,' says Professor Campbell Fraser, 'presents the philosophical foundation of the right of the individual thinker to follow freely the findings of experience; and partly even by its metaphysical defects, it has suggested the chief problems which have occupied modern thinkers since it appeared. Its "design," according to its own words, was "to inquire into the origin, certainty, and extent of human knowledge, together with the grounds of belief, opinion, and assent";—and this as a means to correct the chief cause of human error, which its author found in men's proneness to extend their inquiries to matters beyond their reach, and then to cover their ignorance by empty phrases, or by dogmas which they assumed to be "innate," and therefore out of the reach of criticism. He wanted to make a faithful report, founded simply upon mental facts, as to how far a merely human understanding can go, in the way either of certain knowledge or of more or less probable presumption; and in what man must be contented with ignorance. Although a true report might show that human knowledge must for ever "fall far short of perfect comprehension of whatsoever is," it might be "sufficient for our state"; and at any rate we cannot overcome facts.'

The following is Locke's introduction to the Third Book of the 'Essay,' which is devoted to 'Words':—

'The Commonwealth of Learning is not at this time without Master Builders, whose mighty designs, in advancing the Sciences, will leave lasting monuments to the admiration of posterity. But every one must not hope to be a Boyle or a Sydenham; and in an age that produces such masters as the great Huygenius and the incomparable Mr. Newton, with some others of that strain, 'tis ambition enough to be employed as an under-labourer in clearing ground a little, and removing some of the rubbish that lies in the way to knowledge; which certainly had been very much more advanced in the world, if the endeavours of ingenious and industrious men had not been much cumbered with the learned but frivolous use of uncouth, affected, or unintelligible terms introduced into the science and there made an art of, to that degree that philosophy, which is nothing but the true knowledge of things, was thought unfit or incapable to be brought into well-bred company and polite conversation. Vague and insignificant forms of speech and abuse of language have so long passed for mysteries of science; and hard or misapplied words, with little or no meaning, have, by prescription, such a right to be mistaken for deep learning and height of speculation, that it will not be easy to persuade either those who speak or those who hear them, that they are but the covers of ignorance and hindrance of true knowledge. To break in upon the sanctuary of vanity and ignorance will be, I suppose, some service to human understanding; though so few are apt to think they deceive or are deceived in the use of words, or that the language of the sect they are of has any faults in it which ought to be examined or corrected, that I hope I shall be pardoned if I have in the Third Book dwelt long on this subject; and endeavoured to make it so plain that neither the inveterateness of the mischief, nor the prevalency of the fashion, shall be any excuse for those who will not take care about the meaning of their own words, and will not suffer the significancy of their expressions to be inquired into.'

'Locke's teaching in his other works,' says the authority above quoted, 'is influenced by what is taught in his "Essay." Thus his favourite idea of free toleration for the individual expression of religious belief—then a paradox, now a commonplace—is founded on the dependence of man's knowledge on experience, and on the unfitness of persecution as a means of introducing truth to a human mind; while his refusal of toleration to atheists is in harmony with that "mathematical certainty of God's existence" which he reports to be attainable by every man who uses his faculties enough. The same intellectual individualism pervades what he wrote about government, the education of the young, and the reasonableness of Christianity.'

'Locke's character is reflected in his works. In all that he wrote and did he is pre-eminently himself, in his caution and calculation with an approach to timidity, steady adherence to the concrete of experience, indifference to abstract speculation, suspicion of mystical enthusiasm, calm reasonableness, love for truth, and ready submission to facts even when they could not be reduced to system in a human understanding. His temperate aim was not to explain the universe, but to adapt his own intellectual life and that of others to the actual conditions. He sought to awaken the intellectual spirit, and to bring about an amendment of the operations of the understanding, more than to solve the enigmas of existence. Hence the lasting educational value of his authorship.'

We turn from Locke, the man of science and learning, John Bunyan, and Temple, the elegant and cultivated gentleman, to a very different and incomparably greater writer in the author of 'The Pilgrim's Progress.' In the year of the Restoration John Bunyan was put into Bedford Gaol for breaking the law with regard to preaching. In his autobiography ('Grace Abounding to the Chief of Sinners'), written during his incarceration, he tells us of his early life, his youthful marriage, his 'conversion,' his spiritual struggles, and his mental and physical difficulties. We see him to have been a man of almost no education, and utterly deficient in culture, knowledge, or any wide experience of the world. We find him from his earliest years struggling hard 'to realise his position among the immensities and infinities,' turning for guidance to the two or three pious tracts and the Bible which composed his whole library. His fervid imagination, his passionate emotions, while elevating his soul by making him see through material things to the spiritual within them, torment him with an almost morbid consciousness of his own worthlessness. Three things in especial he had which, combined, go far to making great literature: an absolute, unswerving devotion to what he considered truth (a devotion such as of itself has penetrated less exalted writers with an earnestness that has given long life to their works); the power of so vividly presenting the essentials of a story (as

in 'Grace Abounding,' 'Pilgrim's Progress,' 'The Holy War,' etc.) as to make the reader thoroughly interested in the narrative for its own sake ; and finally, a style beautiful without apparent decoration, strong without evident effort, harmonious without seeming to attempt rhythmical effect, which would make it a delight to read Bunyan merely for its sake. Southey, it is true, has declared Bunyan's style to be a 'homespun' one, whatever that may mean ; but he has added that it is 'not a manufactured one,' and he further calls it 'natural.' Coleridge says that 'it ('Pilgrim's Progress') is composed in the lowest style of English without slang or false grammar. If you attempted to polish it, you would at once destroy the reality of the vision. For works of imagination should be written in very plain language.' What is meant here by the word 'lowest,' or what the 'highest' (as opposed to it) would signify, is not, perhaps, very clear. That Bunyan uses simple language is true enough, but that surely is not to be reckoned a fault ; but it is not the words which are used, but rather the way in which words are used, that constitute style, whether in prose or verse. Here are a few lines from 'Grace Abounding,' which will do as well as any others to illustrate Bunyan's method :—

'A tinkling cymbal is an instrument of music, with which a skilful player can make such melodious and heart-inflaming music that all who hear him play can scarcely hold from dancing ; and yet, behold, the cymbal hath not life, neither comes the music from it, but because of the art of him that plays therewith ; so then the instrument at last may come to nought and perish, though in times past such music hath been made upon it.'

The following short extract from 'Pilgrim's Progress' (Christian being now in the Valley of the Shadow) is a fine specimen of Bunyan's narrative style :—

'One thing I would not let slip : I took notice that now poor Christian was so confounded that he did not know his own voice ; and thus I perceived it : Just when he was come over against the mouth of the burning Pit, one of the wicked ones got behind him, and stepped up softly to him, and whisperingly suggested many grievous blasphemies to him, which he verily thought had proceeded from his own mind. This put Christian more to it than anything that he met with before, even to think that he should now blaspheme Him that he loved so much before ; yet if he could have helped it

he would not have done it ; but he had not the discretion neither to stop his ears, nor to know from whence those blasphemies came.'

To the 'Pilgrim's Progress,' which appeared in 1678, Bunyan wrote a sequel, which is known as the 'Second Part of Pilgrim's Progress,' and appeared in 1684; it narrates the adventures of Christian's wife and children (still 'delivered under the similitude of a dream'), and is generally held to be inferior to its forerunner. In the interval Bunyan had published 'The Life and Death of Mr. Badman' (1680), which Mr. Gosse considers 'to possess greater importance than "The Holy War." It is [he says] absolutely original as an attempt at realistic fiction, and it leads through Defoe on to Fielding and the great school of English novels.' 'The Holy War' here alluded to appeared in 1682; it is a more ambitious work than the 'Pilgrim's Progress,' to which it is usually considered inferior: if this opinion be the right one, it is probably to be justified on the ground that the earlier work is more full of human interest, and less obviously a work of imagination than the latter. The style of 'The Holy War,' however, is to the full as good as in the 'Pilgrim's Progress, while isolated passages might be selected from it which surpass anything to be found in the rest of Bunyan's writings.

Besides the works mentioned above, Bunyan wrote a number of didactic theological tracts—*e.g.* 'Justification by Jesus Christ.' We close this brief sketch of our prose literature in the latter part of the seventeenth century with a mere mention of the chief writers on subjects connected with religion. Among the Nonconformist writers Baxter continued to be the most prominent. His voluminous writings include, among his post-Restoration work, 'The Reformed Liturgy,' 'Now or Never,' 'A Paraphrase on the New Testament.' For the last of these he was sentenced to eighteen months' imprisonment (by Judge Jeffreys) for sedition. John Flavel (1627-91), another Nonconformist clergyman, wrote, among other works, 'Husbandry Spiritualised,' and 'A Saint Indeed.' Barclay and Penn were members of the Society of Friends, generally known as Quakers, of which

community the founder was George Fox (1624-90), whose memorial is his 'Journal of his Life, Travels, and Sufferings,' published when these were all ended. Robert Barclay (1648-90) was the author of several works of piety, including 'Truth cleared of Calumnies,' 'Universal Love considered upon its Right Foundation,' and 'An Apology for the True Christian Divinity.' William Penn (1644-1718), the founder of Pennsylvania, has left us a clearly-written 'Brief Account of . . . the People called Quakers,' as well as a devotional work, written in his early manhood, 'No Cross, no Crown.'

The Church of England clergymen who are found during this period as writers on theology are many. Of Isaac Barrow and of Samuel Parker we have already spoken. John Tillotson (1630-94), Archbishop of Canterbury, was the author of 'The Rule of Faith,' and several volumes of sermons. Edward Stillingfleet (1635-99), Bishop of Worcester, the patron of Bentley and opponent of Locke, wrote his 'Origines Sacrae' in 1662, and a large number of other theological treatises. Robert South (1633-1716), Canon of Christ Church, Oxford, who wrote 'The Laitie Instructed' in 1660, is famous for his wit and his bitter controversy with Dr. William Sherlock (1641-1707), a clergyman who wrote 'Discourses concerning Death' (1689), and 'A Vindication of the Doctrine of the Trinity' (1690), which latter work called forth from Dr. South 'Animadversions on Dr. Sherlock's "Vindication," etc.,' and 'Tritheism charged on Dr. Sherlock's New Notion,' etc. Sherlock, it may be noted, was among those who attacked Locke's 'Essay.'

Dr. Ralph Cudworth's (1617-88) chief claim to remembrance is his 'True Intellectual System of the Universe,' a book which was meant to combat 'Hobbism and Scepticism'; the work was to have been completed in three parts, of which, however, only the first appeared. Cudworth, in combating free-thinking, treats his subject in such a liberal spirit as to lead many to accuse him of unorthodoxy, a charge similar to that brought later against

Dr. Samuel Clarke (1675—1729) for his lectures on 'The Being and Attributes of God' and 'The Evidences of Natural and Revealed Religion,' which, however,

Clarke.

are scientific rather than literary productions.

Dr. Thomas Burnet (1635—1715), and Gilbert Burnet (1643—1715), Bishop of Salisbury, may be mentioned. The former wrote 'The Sacred Theory of the Earth' (1684), in which he attempts to demonstrate the scientific truth of the Mosaic account of the Creation, and was, in

Thomas Burnet.

consequence, suspected of a leaning towards scepticism. His English style (the first edition of 'The Sacred Theory' was in Latin) has been highly praised for its vigour and colour. Bishop Burnet is best known for his 'History

of His Own Times,' a posthumous work. He wrote besides a considerable number of politico-theological works, as well as a 'History of the Reformation of the Church of England,' and (among other works) 'Some Passages in the Life and Death of John, Earl of Rochester,' whom Burnet professes to have been the means of 'converting.'

The posthumously published works of two writers of this age remain to be treated. Of the first of these,

Algernon
Sidney,
1622-83.

Algernon Sidney, not much need be said here. A grand-nephew of the great Sir Philip, Sidney entered public life under his father, the Earl of Leicester, whom he accompanied on missions to France and Denmark. After the outbreak of the civil war, he took the parliament side and fought actively for it. After the Restoration he lived abroad for seventeen years, until at length a pardon was procured for him. Engaging in various political concerns, he was tried on the charge of having a hand in the Rye House plot, most unjustly condemned to death by Jeffreys, and executed in 1683. Among what sufficed for evidence against him was the work which chiefly preserves his name—the MSS. of his 'Discourses concerning Government.' These were published in 1689.

The other writer referred to is a much more important figure in our history and our literature. This is Edward Hyde, Earl of Clarendon. Educated at Oxford, Hyde entered the Middle Temple on leaving college, lived among men of letters, and rose rapidly

Earl of
Clarendon,
1608-74.

to importance in politics. Espousing the royalist side, he was knighted in 1643 and made Chancellor of the Exchequer; went into exile with Charles; and was made Lord Chancellor on the Restoration. Shortly before this, his daughter had been secretly married to James, Duke of York (James II.). In 1667, Clarendon fell a victim to court intrigues and his own popularity, was deprived of office, impeached of high-treason, and sent into exile in France. There, seven years later, he died. His literary monument is his 'History of the Rebellion,' first taken in hand in 1641 and published in 1704. This is supplemented by his 'Life . . . being a Continuation of the History of the Grand Rebellion,' etc., which was published in 1759. A series of essays, many State Papers, and various pamphlets are among his literary remains.

Clarendon's style is prolix, and has nothing of the new clearness and terseness which were beginning to supplant the old involved, parenthetical, over-copious methods in his time; he is generally vigorous, however, and often eloquent: there is something grand and spacious about his workmanship. The 'History' is largely an apologia, and therefore it is natural enough that proportion is not much observed in it, and that digressions abound. What has always recommended it in the eyes of all readers is the number of portraits of contemporaries with which it abounds, and the admirable skill with which these are drawn. The following account of the fall of Strafford will give some idea of his style and method:—

'Thus fell the greatest subject in power, and little inferior to any in fortune, that was at that time in either of the three kingdoms; who could well remember the time when he led those people who then pursued him to his grave. He was a man of great parts and extraordinary endowments of nature, not unadorned with some addition of art and learning, though that again was more improved and illustrated by the other; for he had a readiness of conception and sharpness of expression which made his learning thought more than in truth it was. His first inclinations and addresses to the Court were only to establish his greatness in the country, where he apprehended some acts of power from the old Lord Saville, who had been his rival always there, and of late had strengthened himself by being made a Privy Councillor and officer at Court: but his first attempts were so prosperous that he contented not himself with being secure from his power in the country, but rested not till he had bereaved him of all power and place in Court, and so sent him down, a most abject

disconsolate old man, to his county, where he was to have the superintendency over him too, by getting himself at that time made Lord President of the North. These successes, applied to a nature too elate and arrogant of itself, and a quicker progress into the greatest employments and trusts, made him more transported with disdain of other men, and more contemning the forms of business than haply he would have been if he had met with some interruptions in the beginning, and had passed in a more leisurely gradation to the office of a statesman.

'He was, no doubt, of great observation and a piercing judgment, both unto things and persons; but his too good skill in persons made him judge the worse of things: for it was his misfortune to be of a time wherein very few wise men were equally employed with him, and scarce any (but the Lord Coventry, whose trust was more confined) whose faculties and abilities were equal to his: so that upon the matter he wholly relied upon himself, and, discerning many defects in most men, he too much neglected what they said or did. Of all his passions his pride was most predominant, which a moderate exercise of ill fortune might have corrected and reformed, and which was by the hand of Heaven strangely punished by bringing his destruction upon him by two things that he most despised, the people and Sir Harry Vane. In a word, the epitaph which Plutarch records that Sylla wrote for himself may not be unfitly applied to him; that "no man did ever pass him either in doing good to his friends or in doing mischief to his enemies"; for his acts of both kinds were most exemplar and notorious.'

CHAPTER XXVI.

GENERAL SURVEY OF EIGHTEENTH-CENTURY LITERATURE.

WE have seen how in the preceding period what is called
The Poetry. 'Classicism' had almost entirely won the victory
Pope. over what is called 'Romanticism.' With Pope,
who is the commanding figure in the poetry of
the first half of the eighteenth century, this victory is
rendered more splendid, even while side by side with his
triumphs signs of a revolt against his sway are soon to be
discerned. There is no need to enter into a discussion of
his works or influence now, as we have to treat his writings
in some detail later on: it will suffice for us to say that in
them we always find that his models in versification (and
often in choice of subjects) are Dryden's, and that his sway
over his contemporaries was almost unbounded. Pope's
neatness, wit, elegance, and diction were what charmed
them—and perhaps these are just what cause him to be
least loved by the readers of the great poets nowadays.

But while the fame of the classic poetry was at its height,
the way was being prepared for its overthrow, and for
another revolution in poetry. Beside Pope and Addison
and Prior, there is Thomson; and the century which has
the 'Rape of the Lock' in its second decade, and in its
fifth the 'Dunciad,' has in its last the 'Lyrical Ballads' of
Coleridge and Wordsworth. We have then to endeavour
to follow the direction of the stream of poetry as it
flowed with many windings and bendings-back from Sir
Plume to the Ancient Mariner, from him who bids us

'Eye Nature's walks, shoot folly as it flies,
And catch the Manners living as they rise;

Laugh where we must, be candid where we can ;
But vindicate the ways of God to Man'

(Pope's *Essay on Man*, 1732)

to the poet who tells how he has 'learned to look on nature

. . . hearing oftentimes
The still sad music of humanity,
Nor harsh nor grating, though of ample power
To chasten and subdue.'

(Wordsworth's *Tintern Abbey*, 1798.)

Decay of the 'Classic' School. We talk sometimes of 'schools' of writers, and the phrase is not without its use, provided that we bear in mind that the particular qualities by which any member of a given school deserves his fame are peculiar to him and not the common property of him and his 'co-pupils.' The poet Gray, writing in 1770, makes out the following heading for a section of a history of poetry :

Part V.—School of France introduced after the Restoration, Waller, Dryden, Addison, Prior and Pope, *which has continued to our own times.*

The discussion of the origin and the distinctive qualities of this 'school' belongs to the history of the preceding period; the peculiar merits which give to Dryden and to Pope places of high honour in our literature, we have not to deal with in this chapter. The chief defects of this 'school'—its narrowness, its want of sympathy, its lack of interest in Nature, and its too close adherence to conventional rules—must be borne in mind here, since it is of importance for us to notice the causes that prepared its decay, at a time when new tendencies—new 'schools' in literature, if you will—were combining to give it its deathblow. For we shall find that there is (Gray's note notwithstanding) no poet of any note—with the exception, perhaps, of Johnson—who can with any propriety be classed as belonging to Pope's school. Before we endeavour to justify this statement, the student might with advantage glance at the chronological table prefixed to this volume.

From that table we see that while Pope is preparing to write the 'Dunciad,' Thomson is giving us our first great poem of natural description, and that in a metre (blank verse) as far removed from any kinship with Pope as it is in matter and manner, its main

Anti-
'Classic'
tendencies.

resemblance being merely in its diction—that splendid ‘diction’ of the first part of the eighteenth century which Johnson praises Pope for teaching us, which Wordsworth rejected, and Matthew Arnold derides. Contemporary with these is Ramsay, who is no great poet certainly, but whose ‘Gentle Shepherd’ reminds us pleasantly that his idea of a pastoral differed considerably from that of the reigning poet: nor will the student pass too lightly over Dyer’s delicate ‘Grongar Hill,’ with its exquisite landscape drawing and its Descriptions of Nature. sweet L’Allegro movement; this poem, published in the same year (1726) as Thomson’s ‘Winter,’ must serve as a reminder that one of the chief elements of Wordsworth’s poetry had found no mean exponents in the early part of the eighteenth century—‘the age of prose and reason.’ Nor need we suppose that there was not a large public ready to appreciate it. ‘It [“The seasons”] was no sooner read,’ says a contemporary quoted by Wordsworth, ‘than universally admired; those only excepted who had not been used to feel or to look for anything in poetry beyond a point of satirical or epigrammatic wit, a smart antithesis richly trimmed with rhyme with the softness of an elegiac complaint. To such his manly spirit could not readily commend itself; till, after a more attentive perusal, they had got the better of their prejudices, and either acquired or affected a truer taste. A few others stood aloof merely because they had long before fixed the articles of their poetical creed, and resigned themselves to an absolute despair of ever seeing anything new and original. These were somewhat mortified, their notions disturbed, by the appearance of a poet who seemed to owe nothing but to Nature and his own genius. But, in a short time, the applause became unanimous; every one wondering how so many pictures, and pictures so familiar, should have moved them but faintly to what they felt in his descriptions. His digressions too, the overflowings of a tender, benevolent heart, charmed the reader no less; leaving him in doubt whether he should more admire the Poet or love the Man.’ Wordsworth, it is true, would have us believe that the reception accorded to Thomson was one of wonderment and novelty, rather than true

appreciation, but there is no good ground for believing this.

'Wit and poetry and Pope' were with many synonymous at this time, it is true; but not by any means with all, and in this connection it is useful to remember that, great as was the prestige of the heroic couplet, a large amount of blank verse (and some of it very good blank verse) belongs to the time when Pope's fame was at its height.¹ Other

Return to older metres came into favour too; Shenstone, for older metres instance, turns to the Spenserian stanza in his 'Schoolmistress,' while all his poems show that his spirit revolts from the conventional standards of his time, though he is as artificial as any of his contemporaries; the element of tenderness, however, of genuine pathos, which plays so large a part in later poetry, and which is so conspicuously lacking in Pope, is well to the fore in Shenstone. Shortly after the 'Schoolmistress,' Thomson gives us a really great poem in Spenser's stanza—'The Castle of Indolence' (1748)—which is purposely archaic, and therefore shows an openly avowed turning from eighteenth-century standards. Before we reach this, however, the works of Collins and the first writings of Gray² meet our eyes, and these seem to stand as far removed from the bulk of the verse of their age as it is possible for any writings to do; it is not our purpose to discuss their works here, but we will just point out that Collins

Lyrical brings back into English poetry a lyric spirit that elements. had long been absent from it, while Gray, in his best poems, reached 'the style he aimed at,' as he tells us, viz., 'extreme conciseness of expression, yet pure, perspicuous and musical:' let us add that he—and Collins, too, to a certain extent—'lived,' as Matthew Arnold says, 'with the great poets.'³ His 'Elegy' was published in 1750, and when

¹ E.g. Somerville's 'Chase' (1734), Glover's 'Leonidas' (1737), Young's 'Night Thoughts' (1742), Blair's 'Grave' (1743), Armstrong's 'Art of Preserving Health' (1744), Akenside's 'Pleasures of Imagination' (1744), etc.

² Collins's 'Odes' were first published in 1747, five years after his 'Persian Eclogues'; Gray's first printed Ode appeared in 1747; the 'Elegy' appeared in 1750.

³ He [Gray] lived above all with the Greeks, through perpetually studying and enjoying them; and he caught their poetic point of view for regarding life, caught their poetic manner. The point of view and the manner are not self-sprung in him, he caught them of others; and he had not the free and abundant use of them. But whereas Addison and Pope never had the use of them, Gray had the use of them at times. He is the scantiest and frailest of classics in our poetry, but he is a classic.—ARNOLD.

we read that 'poem of such high perfection and such universal appeal to the tenderest and the noblest depth of human feeling,'¹ we know that we have moved not so much to a great distance from Pope as into a province unknown to him. It is not, however, to the greater poets alone that we should confine our attention here; let the student but glance at the names of some of the less valuable metrical productions (on pp. 443-6), written in the middle third of the century, to see what a variety of new subjects the verse-makers were treating of then, what new paths they were trying to force

Variety of
subjects.

Poetry into, to what old ones they were endeavouring to make her return; he will then not fail to see that many who had no patience with those servile imitators of Pope, who 'made poetry a mere mechanic art,' were seeking fresh roads for the muse. Two men we may mention, however, who may be considered to

Pope's
followers.

be the chief of Pope's genuine followers—Johnson² and his antagonist, Churchill³: yet Johnson, having a certain dignity and stately earnestness which is all his own, is at the same time far more wordy, cumbrous, and inelegant than his avowed master; while Churchill is at least as much indebted to Butler as to Pope, and is not a pupil very creditable to either. Goldsmith, again, adheres to Pope's couplet, but he handles it in his own way; the pensive reflection, common to much later poetry, appears in his writings, and so, too, the sentiment—sentimentality, perhaps—

Sentimental
element.

which is a marked characteristic of our literature (but more especially of the prose literature) about this time; we observe that Goldsmith in his poetry is fond of descriptions (notably of foreign scenes) and of village life—the village life, however, of the pleasantly artificial kind, not without kinship with Shenstone's conventions, totally differing from the sternly gloomy realism of Crabbe, whose poetical work begins with the last quarter of the century.

The 'romantic'
movement.

By this time, however, the revolt against the so-called 'classic' school had become definite and conscious; two or three occurrences after the middle

¹ Mr. Swinburne.

² London, 1788, 'Vanity of Human Wishes,' 1748.

³ 'The Rosciol,' 1761.

of the century may serve to mark clearly the progress of that new romantic movement. We have seen already the striving against convention shown in much of the literary work of the day; we see one remarkable sign of this in the reception afforded by men of taste to the forgeries of Macpherson, who 'discovered' the remains of the Celtic poet Ossian;¹ his poems in their English dress are sentimental (and undoubtedly eighteenth-century) rhapsodies in prose, in whose genuineness no one now believes; but the fact that these wild effusions were welcomed with enthusiasm and exercised a considerable influence both here and on the Continent is a plain indication that the yoke of the 'correct' school was thrown off. A few years later a youth of great genius, out of harmony with eighteenth-century traditions, conceived the unfortunate idea of passing off his poems as the genuine work of a mediæval English poet; Chatterton's deceptions were soon discovered, but they have more interest than is connected with the miserable life and tragic death of their author. From Chatterton, if we wish for a definite era, we may date the commencement of the new romantic poetry; his writings in form and spirit belong entirely to the new age, not only having as little in common with the preceding portion of the eighteenth as they have with the fifteenth century, to which he would have us believe they belong, but exercising a marked influence on his successors, notably on Coleridge. Two works of research also mark strikingly the tendency of the time to look back lovingly to the earlier English poetry. While Chatterton was sending his poems to Horace Walpole, and Walpole was giving evidence of the zeal and ignorance of the craving after the mediæval by successfully palming off his own 'Castle of Otranto,' as a 'Gothic' romance (1764), Percy was preparing his edition of old English ballads²—that book of which Wordsworth says: 'I do not think that there is an able writer in verse of the present day³ who would not be proud to acknowledge his obligations to the Reliques.' Ten years after this (1774) appeared the first volume of Warton's 'History of

¹ His first experiment, 'Fragments of Ancient Poetry,' appeared in 1760.

² Percy's 'Reliques of Ancient English Poetry' (1765).

³ 1815 (in the appendix to the second edition of the 'Lyrical Ballads').

English Poetry,' a book which, whatever defects it may have, shows a very genuine love of our older literature, and a very close acquaintance with it. It was published at a time when readers were very much more willing to hear about the poets before Cowley—with whom the collection of poetry for which Johnson wrote 'Lives' begins—than they would have been a few years earlier. And now we may take it that what is known as 'eighteenth-century poetry' is finally done with, for of Darwin and Hayley and such we need take little notice, or none. But here, towards the end of our period, we meet with many great poets who belong to the new time; two of these, we will remember—Burns and Cowper—lived, wrote, and died in the eighteenth-century, while others—Wordsworth, Coleridge, Landor—are beginning their activity. Burns is so entirely apart from preceding English poets that we reserve our remarks on his work till we deal with them subsequently; Cowper acknowledges Pope as his metrical master, yet differs widely from him even in the technical part of his art, while into the spirit of his best poems have entered a love of nature, a deep tenderness, a feeling of humanity, that hitherto had not been equalled; we say nothing of the curious mixture of cheerfulness and melancholy which distinguishes him from other poets. Coleridge, Wordsworth, Landor, must be dealt with more fully when we treat of the next century; yet let us note that Landor goes to the Greeks for his inspiration, and that Wordsworth and Coleridge's joint production, the 'Lyrical Ballads,' sounds the chief new notes in poetry strongly and sweetly, while on their work, as on Cowper's and on Burns's, we find the influence of one tremendous result of the revolt against conventions in the eighteenth century—the French Revolution.

On the drama during this period only one or two general remarks are necessary here. The separation between
 Drama. literature and the stage, which began before the Restoration, was growing gradually more and more complete. Between the death of Queen Anne and the end of the century there are no tragedies remarkable in our literature, nor any very striking comedies, except those of Goldsmith and Sheridan. When the supply of comedies of the type made

popular by Congreve, Wycherley, Farquhar, began to fail (owing, perhaps, partly to the fact that the public revolted against them in consequence of Jeremy Collier's attack on their impropriety), a taste was developed for the sentimental comedy, such as Steele's 'Conscious Lovers.' Plenty of eighteenth century plays are of this type, but none of them is of very high merit. In the best plays of the period—those of the two writers mentioned—the authors have modelled themselves upon the so-called 'Restoration' comedy-writers, though this is much more evident in Sheridan than in Goldsmith.

But, undoubtedly, the chief glory of eighteenth century literature is in prose, and in that particular
 Prose. branch of prose most akin to poetry—fiction.

Before we consider this, however, we must remember that the beginning of the age is rendered notable by a large amount of fine essays in pamphlets and periodicals. This is the era of 'occasional' writings, and the time from which the modern magazine and newspaper date their first great days. We have Addison and Steele and Swift and Defoe, devoting their energies to this work, besides many minor but notable writers. The tradition of the essay which appeared at regular intervals was nobly taken up and carried on by Johnson, and it still flourishes vigorously under altered forms.

The genesis of the novel itself is partly due to this
 Realistic 'occasional' writing, and is in a degree fortuitous;
 narrative. Defoe's stories spring out of the columns of the newspaper—great parent of fiction—where they endeavoured to pass themselves off as veracious accounts of real facts; Richardson's first idea is the moral guidance of the young person; Fielding makes his entry as a novelist by caricaturing Richardson. The eighteenth century novel exemplifies the tendencies of the age, just as the eighteenth century poetry does; just as the 'correct' poetry was the result of the reaction against the flabby lawlessness of the later Stuart romanticists, so the plain, straightforward

narratives of Defoe satisfied a taste that was sickened by the absurd pseudo-chivalrous romances, illegitimate descendants of Sidney's 'Arcadia,' which continued to be poured forth during the seventeenth and part of the eighteenth century. In Richardson, who devotes himself mainly to the

Analytic fiction. analysis of character, the sentimental element, which becomes a strong factor in our literature a few years later, shows itself. Fielding, with more deliberately artistic aim, shows plainly enough the position that he considered this young form of literature ought to

The prose epic. occupy, when he talks of the 'comic epic poem in prose.' When we turn from Smollett to Sterne, we feel how important a part the sentimentalism, the tenderness—sometimes real, sometimes affected—such as we find in the latter, must needs play in acting as a set off to the brutal and barbarous coarseness of the former.

Sentimentality and sensibility. This turning consciously to the softer side of things is not without intimate connection with the worship—or would-be worship—of nature, which we have seen in the poets of the day. It is part of the revolt against the pseudo-'classic' fetters, and appears, as we have seen, in the poetry of Thomson, long before Rousseau, whose 'Nouvelle Héloïse' (1760) marks a period in the movement, which had its origin in an attempt to throw off one kind of artificiality and one set of conventions, heedless of its bondage to another set at least as unnatural. Goldsmith, in his 'Vicar of Wakefield' (1766), as in much of his verse and prose, exhibits the tendency in its sweetest and most pleasing form; Mackenzie, in his 'Man of Feeling,' brings it to a *reductio ad absurdum* shortly before Goethe—at that time much influenced by English writers—gives the world, in 1774, the classic of sentimentality in 'Die Leiden des jungen Werthers.'

From Smollett to the end of the century no novels of the first rank come before us, but it is interesting to note how the number of works of fiction rapidly multiplies—as if novel-writing, as a branch of literary art, was to replace the decayed drama—and how every element we have noted in the poetry comes before us in the prose. In multifarious ways, as we shall see, the story-

Minor novelists.

writers are seeking new paths; some trying, like Walpole and Clara Reeve, to reconstruct the romantic past; some, like Beckford, taking us to foreign climes and scenes; some, like Frances Burney, giving us pictures of contemporary English life.

Besides the novelists, there are great names in the Other prose writers. eighteenth century in nearly all departments of prose-writing. It will suffice here to point out that some of our chief works in theology, political philosophy, history, and criticism belong to the period we are now to study in more detail, and that among the chief writers thereof are Bolingbroke, Butler, Hume, Johnson, Gibbon, Burke, Adam Smith, and Reid.

CHAPTER XXVII

EIGHTEENTH-CENTURY POETS—FROM POPE TO GRAY.

POPE was the son of a tradesman who had retired from business with a competence. He was brought up as a Roman Catholic, and remained in that faith through life. His turn for versification showed itself very early, and was encouraged by his father. At the age of eight he made some verse-translations from the classics, and much of his work of this nature belongs to his boyhood. There is a story that Pope (at the age of twelve or less) once saw Dryden sitting on his literary throne at Wills's coffee-house. Whether this be true or not, it is certain that Pope was early familiar with the older poet's work, whose style he imitated and modelled his own versification and satires upon, and whom he praises unboundedly, as in the 'Essay on Criticism.' Dryden's 'Fables' set Pope upon some imitations of Chaucer ('January and May,' 'The Wife of Bath,' 'The Temple of Fame'), which were published in 1709 and after. We need not discuss the early translations and imitations, which included, besides those above mentioned, adaptations from Ovid and Statius, and imitations (done in boyhood) of Spenser, Waller, Cowley, Rochester, Dorset, and Swift, with whose works he must have been closely acquainted at an early age. But the work done by the year 1714, including the Pastorals, the 'Essay on Criticism,' 'The Messiah,' and 'The Rape of the Lock,' may be conveniently dealt with now.

The Pastorals appeared in one of 'Tonson's Miscellanies' in 1709, but they had been written some years earlier, when the poet was between sixteen and seventeen. They are four eclogues ('Spring,' 'Summer,'

'Autumn,' 'Winter') in imitation of Vergil, and are perhaps as good as that kind of artificial, mock-arcadian-rustic style of composition can be; but the taste for this particular sort of metrical effusion has gone by. It is unnecessary to point out that the verse is (as even the earliest of Pope's is) scrupulously correct and well constructed. It may be noted here that the second and third are dedicated to Garth and Wycherly respectively, who had been among the first to encourage Pope to publish. In the same volume as Pope's *Pastorals* appeared another set of *Pastorals* by Ambrose Philips. Pope subsequently attacked them in Addison's paper, 'The Guardian,' under the form of an impartial comparison between his own and Philips' style, in which, 'with an unexampled and unequalled artifice of irony,' says Johnson, 'though he has himself always the advantage, he gives the preference to Philips.' This seems to have been about the time when the breach between Addison and Pope first opened, while the friendship between the latter and Gay was closely cemented.

'Windsor Forest' (written in 1704, and 1713) is a descriptive poem of over four hundred lines, after the manner of Denham's 'Cooper's Hill.' The remarks on the *Pastorals* to a great extent apply to this as well. It is the last of Pope's ventures in this description of writing. The reader may compare this specimen (from the latter part) with the passage already quoted from Denham's poem:—

'Hail, sacred peace! hail, long-expected days,
That Thames's glory to the stars shall raise!
Though Tiber's streams immortal Rome behold,
Though foaming Hermus swells with tides of gold,
From heav'n itself tho' sev'n-fold Nilus flows,
And harvests on a hundred realms bestows;
These now no more shall be the Muses' themes,
Lost in my fame as in the sea their streams.'

The 'Messiah' appeared in the 'Spectator,' 1712; it is suggested by, rather than imitated from, Vergil's 'Pollio'; to our thinking it reminds one of Addison rather than Vergil, and does not even faintly recall the passages of Isaiah, on which it is avowedly based.

A very favourable specimen of the hundred and eight lines of the poem is this :—

As the good shepherd tends his fleecy care,
Seeks freshest pasture and the purest air,
Explores the lost, the wand'ring sheep directs,
By day o'ersees them and by night protects,
The tender lamb he raises in his arms,
Feeds from his hands and from his bosom warms ;
Thus shall mankind his guardian cares engage,
The promised father of the future age.'

We now come to the first of Pope's longer works, the 'Essay on Criticism,' which, though written in 1709, did not appear till 1711. This is the first real evidence of Pope's great qualities, and we shall now give a brief account of it. It belongs to the same class as Roscommon's 'Essay on Translated Verse' (see p. 389), to which it is far superior. The poet divided it into three sections—viz., 1-200, 201-559, 560 to the concluding line 744, which may be summarised as dealing with (a) the need of studying the principles of taste, the necessity for relying on Nature not alone, but improving our judgment by art, by studying the ancients and reverencing them ; (b) the causes that hinder our judging correctly—habit of looking at a part separate from the whole: 'Some to conceits alone their taste confine'—'Others for language all their care express,'

'But most by numbers judge a poet's song,
And smooth or rough, with them is right or wrong :
In the bright Muse, though thousand charms conspire,
Her voice is all these tuneful fools admire :
Who haunt Parnassus but to please their ear,
Not mend their minds, as some to church repair,
Not for the doctrine, but the music there.
These equal syllables alone require,
Though oft the ear the open vowels tire ;
While expletives their feeble aid do join,
And ten low words oft creep in one dull line ;
While they ring round the same unvaried chimes,
With sure returns of still expected rhymes ;
Where'er you find "The cooling western breeze,"
In the next line it "whispers through the trees."
If crystal streams "with pleasing murmurs creep,"
The reader's threatened (not in vain) with "sleep."

Then at the last and only couplet fraught
 With some unmeaning thing they call a thought,
 A needless Alexandrine ends the song,
 That, like a wounded snake, drags its slow length along.'

In these lines Pope shows, exemplifies, and ridicules the chief faults of the unpoetical writers and critics of 'correct' poetry. The section concludes with the deprecation of party-spirit, prejudice and envy in forming our judgments, and some lines on the state of poetry at the Restoration—

'When love was all an easy monarch's care,
 Seldom at council, never in a war:
 Tilts ruled the state, and statesmen farces writ—
 Nay, wits had pensions, and young lords had wit,' etc.—

which it may amuse the reader to compare with the extract from Dryden's 'Threnodia Augustalis.' (c) The concluding section deals with the functions of the critic, and the way in which he should discharge them. It includes an attack on the bitter critic Dennis and some lines on the

'Book-full blockhead, ignorantly read,
 With loads of learned lumber in his head,—
 All books he reads, and all he reads assails,
 From Dryden Fables down to D'Urfey's Tales.

He ends with a laudation of Quintilian and Longinus, of Erasmus, Vida, and of Boileau (who 'still in right of Horace sways'), of Sheffield and Roscommon.

'The Rape of the Lock' is a mock heroic poem, describing with admirable gravity and raillery the incidents connected with

'The Rape of
 the Lock.'

'What dire offence from am'rous causes springs,
 What mighty contests rise from trivial things.'

The 'dire offence' is the 'rape' of a 'lock' of Belinda's (Miss Fermor's) hair by 'a well-bred lord (Lord Petre). The poem appeared first in two cantos in 1712, but was enlarged and republished in 1714, when the nymphs and sprites were introduced into it. The delicately-satirical mock-seriousness of a short epic which turns round a subject so exceedingly trivial is its most notable feature. Thus, this is part of the speech of Belinda's protecting sylph on the morning of the rape:—

'This day black omens threat the brightest fair
 That e'er deserved a watchful spirit's care;

Some dire disaster, or by force or slight ;
 But what or where, the fates have wrapt in night.
 Whether the nymph shall break D.ann's law,
 Or some frail china jar receive a flaw,
 Or stain her honour—or her new brocade—
 Forget her prayers—or miss a masquerade—
 Or lose her heart (or necklace) at a ball :
 Or whether Heaven has doomed that Shock must fall.'

In the year in which the enlarged edition of the 'Rape of the Lock' was published, Pope was diligently at work over the beginning of his version of Homer, which was to bring him great fame at the time, and money enough to secure him a competence for life. His smouldering wrath against Addison had been gradually drawing him away from the Whig dictator's circle, while his intercourse with Swift, Arbuthnot, Bolingbroke, and others of the opposite camp, was made the closer by the foundation of the 'Martin Scribblerus' Club, which began to meet in the year 1713, and with which Swift's 'Gulliver' and Pope's 'Dunciad,' as well as many smaller works, are connected. In 1717 Pope published his 'Epistle of Eloisa to Abelard,' and he had a share with Arbuthnot in helping Gay with the farce, 'Three Hours after Marriage.' In the same year his father died, and the poet took up his residence with his mother at Twickenham in the year following. There he worked hard at Homer—which, when completed, brought him in altogether some £8000—amused himself by constructing his famous grotto, and had among his neighbours Lady Mary Wortley Montagu,¹ who afterwards was to figure among the many that had to endure the lash of his satire. In 1725 he published an edition of Shakespeare, which drew down the strictures of Theobald upon him. Theobald received his punishment in the 'Dunciad,' which appeared in its first form in 1728. Then followed the various 'Moral Essays' between 1731 and 1735. In the latter year the 'Epistle to Dr. Arbuthnot' was published, and finally, after the 'Imitations of Horace,' the

¹ This Lady M. W. Montagu (1690—1762) is known in literature as perhaps the best of our letter-writers. Her husband was ambassador to Turkey in 1716, and she went with him to Constantinople, whence she wrote brilliant descriptions of Eastern travel (published posthumously). She saw the practice of inoculation for small-pox in the East, and helped to introduce it into England.

'Dunciad,' in its finished and enlarged form; this was in 1743, the year before Pope's death.

Pope's translation of Homer began with versions of some passages from the 'Odyssey,' which appeared in 'Lintot's Miscellany' (1714); next year he published (by subscription) the first four books of the 'Iliad,' completing the work by 1720. About two years later he set to work on the 'Odyssey' (with Fenton and Broome for coadjutors), and this was finished in 1725. The success of the translation was very great; it was looked upon by Pope's contemporaries as the finest poetical achievement of the time, and long after Pope's death the same opinion was held of it. The judgment of our day, if not so enthusiastic as that of Dr. Johnson, which declares it to be 'the noblest version of poetry which the world has ever seen,' is yet willing to allow it considerable merits. It is undeniably vigorous, it is not lacking in dignity, and the diction, in spite of all that has been urged against it, is at least as appropriate as that of any other translation. Two faults, however, all must recognise in it: the first—that Pope's scholarship was imperfect—is a comparatively small one; but the other—his failure to get any portion of the Homeric spirit, the Homeric attitude, is absolutely fatal to the claims of the work to rank as a great *translation*; such merits as it has—and it has many—are entirely Pope's, and not Homer's, and the same may be said of its faults.

'The Epistle of Eloisa to Abelard' is more emotional and fervid than anything else Pope has written. It is based on the well-known story of the lovers who, 'after a long course of calamities, retired each to a several convent and consecrated the remainder of their days to religion.' A letter of Abelard's, written to a friend, falls into Eloisa's hands and re-awakens all her former love. In the concluding portion of the poem, the nun imagines herself resting on a tomb, 'the neighbour of the dead,' called at last from her narrow cell;

'In each low wind methinks a Spirit calls,
And more than echoes talk along the walls.
Here as I watch'd the dying lamps around,
From yonder shrine I heard a hollow sound.
"Come, sister, come! (it said, or seem'd to say,
Thy place is here, sad s'ter, come away.

Once like thyself, I trembled, wept and pray'd,
 Love's victim then, tho' now a sainted maid ;
 But all is calm in this eternal sleep ;
 Here grief forgets to groan, and love to weep,
 Ev'n superstition loves ev'ry fear :
 For God, not man, absolves our frailties here."

This short poem is remarkable as one of the few in which Pope handles, and with considerable success, passion and despair.

Of the 'Moral Essays,' the most famous are the four epistles which make up the 'Essay on Man.'¹ This is dedicated to Bolingbroke, whom he addresses as his 'guide, philosopher, and friend.' The first epistle, after a statement that it is the intention of the writer to

'Eye Nature's walks, shoot Folly as it flies,
 And catch the Manners living as they rise,
 Laugh where we must, be candid where we can ;
 But vindicate the ways of God to Man'

(which last line is Milton's, with the substitution of 'vindicate' for 'justify'), deals with 'the nature and state of man with respect to the universe.' Man, the poet upholds, is not an imperfect being, but his happiness in the present depends partly upon his ignorance of the future, and partly upon his hope of a happier state. The cause of most of his misery is pride, which blinds him to his limitations :

'In Pride, in reas'ning Pride, our error lies ;
 All quit their sphere and rush into the skies.
 Pride still is aiming at their blest abodes,
 Men would be Angels, Angels would be Gods.
 Aspiring to be Gods, if Angels fell,
 Aspiring to be Angels, Men rebel :
 And who but wishes to invert the laws
 Of Order, sins against th' Eternal Cause.'

The poet points out the folly of man's imagining himself the final cause of creation, the unreasonableness of his complaints against Providence for not making him perfect, and he endeavours to show that throughout the whole universe,

'Far as Creation's ample range extends,
 The scale of sensual, mental pow'rs ascends,'

¹ Besides the 'Essay on Man,' there are five other epistles known as 'Moral Essays.' These are respectively the 'Characters of Men,' the 'Characters of Women,' 'Of the Use of Riches,' 'Of Taste,' and a letter to Addison (written in 1713), 'occasioned by his dialogue on Medals.'

from the mole and the grovelling swine to the 'half-reas'ning elephant,' and finally to 'man's imperial race.' If one link were broken in the chain that connects the lowest of creatures with man, and man through 'natures ethereal, angel,' etc., with God, the whole scheme of creation would be ruined. Hence we are to see the impiety of any one portion of creation aspiring to be above its responsibilities and mourning

'the tasks or pains
The great directing Mind of All ordains.'

The epistle closes with the following plain statement of the writer's optimistic standpoint :

'Cease then, nor Order Imperfection name,
Our proper bliss depends on what we blame.
Know thy own point : this kind, this due degree
Of blindness, weakness, Heav'n bestows on thee,
Submit—in this, or any other sphere,
Secure to be as blest as thou canst bear :
Safe in the hand of one disposing Pow'r,
Or in the natal, or the mortal hour.
All Nature is but Art, unknown to thee ;
All Chance, Direction, which thou canst not see ;
All Discord, Harmony, not understood ;
All partial Evil, universal Good !
And, spite of Pride, in erring Reason's spite,
One truth is clear, *Whatever is, is right.*'

In the succeeding epistles in the 'Essay on Man' Pope elaborates his (or rather Bolingbroke's) system of philosophy ; he discusses (Epistle ii.) 'Man as an Individual,' bidding each

'Know then thyself, presume not God to scan ;
The proper study of mankind is Man,'

and analyses the evil passions, and shows how even they are part of the scheme of the All-wise for the benefit of the universe. He proceeds to deal with them in his relation to society, and treats in his concluding epistle of the essentials of man's happiness :

'Honour and shame from no Condition rise ;
Act well your part, there all the honour lies.
Fortune in Men has some small difference made,
One flaunts in rags, one flutters in brocade ;
The cobbler apron'd, and the parson gown'd,
The friar hooded, and the monarch crown'd.

"What differ more" (you cry), "than crown and cowl?"
 I'll tell you, friend, a wise man and a fool.
 You'll find if once the monarch acts the monk,
 Or, cobbler-like, the parson will be drunk,
 Worth makes the man, and want of it, the fellow;
 The rest is all but leather or prunella."

A sort of pendant to the 'Essay on Man' is the beautiful 'Universal Prayer' which (according to Warburton¹) was composed by Pope to show that his system, which, as put forward in the 'Essay,' had been suspected of a tendency towards fatalism, was, in reality, 'founded in free-will and terminated in piety.' The first three stanzas—this is one of the few poems in which Pope does not use the heroic couplet—are as follows:

'Father of All! in ev'ry Age,
 In ev'ry Clime ador'd
 By Saint, by Savage, and by Sage,
 Jehovah, Jove, or Lord!
 'Thou Great First Cause, least understood:
 Whio all my sense confin'd
 To know but this, that Thou art Good,
 And that myself am blind;
 'Yet gave me, in this dark Estate,
 To see the Good from Ill;
 And binding Nature fast in Fate,
 Left free the Human Will.

Over the rest of the 'Moral Essays,' full as they are of witty epigrams and of bitingly satirical traits, we cannot linger; nor may we devote much space to the capital 'Imitations of Horace's Satires and Epistles' (1735-38) which many are inclined to think (with Mark Pattison) 'the most original of Pope's writings, and the most natural and spontaneous outcome of his genius.' From the 'Epistle to Dr. Arbuthnot' prefixed to them we quote the portrait of Addison, which, though not published till now (1737), had been written many years earlier:

'Peace to all such! but were there one whose fires
 True Genius kindles, and fair Fame inspires;
 Blest with each talent and each art to please,
 And born to write, converse and live with ease:

¹ See note on p. 524.

Should such a man too fond to rule alone,
 Bear, like the Turk, no brother near the throne ;
 View him with scornful, yet with jealous eyes,
 And hate for arts that caus'd himself to rise ;
 Damn with faint praise, assent with civil leer,
 And without sneering, teach the rest to sneer ;
 Willing to wound, and yet afraid to strike,
 Just hint a fault, and hesitate dislike ;
 Alike reserved to blame, or to commend,
 A tim'rous foe, and a suspicious friend ;
 Dreading ev'n fools, by Flatterers besieg'd,
 And so obliging that he ne'er oblig'd ;
 [Who, if two wits on rival themes contest,
 Approves of each, but likes the worst the best ;]¹
 Like Cato, give his little Senate laws,
 And sit attentive to his own applause ;
 While Wits and Templars ev'ry sentence raise,
 And wonder with a foolish face of praise—
 Who but must laugh, if such a man there be ?
 Who would not weep, if Atticus were he ?

In the 'Epistle to Arbuthnot' the poet gives a sketch of his own career, of the way he is beset with scribblers of all kinds, and attacked in 'person, morals and family' by the numerous enemies he had made. Many of these had already found a place in the three books of 'The Dunciad,' published in 1728, and many more were admitted in 1742, when Pope added a fourth book to it. 'This poem,' as Martinus Scribblerus is made to say of it, 'as it celebrateth the most grave and ancient of things, Chaos, Night, and Dulness ; so it is of the most grave and ancient kind.' It is a long satire in the form of an epic, directed against human thick-headedness in general and against Pope's personal foes in particular. Its relation to Dryden's 'MacFleckno' is obvious at once, but Pope's poem is aimed at more than merely one wretched rhymester. 'Herein,' says Professor Ward, 'is the justification of Pope's satire. It has frequently been argued that in the 'Dunciad' he employs his satirical powers, intensified to their utmost degree, against objects undeserving of so serious an attack. He goes back, says a brilliant critic (M. Taine), to the time of the Deluge, he indulges in far-

¹ These lines, not inserted in the published version, but restored from Pope's MS., doubtless allude to the head and front of Addison's offending—his praise of Tickell's translation of the first book of the 'Iliad.'

~ fetched historical tirades, he describes at length the reign of Dulness, past, present, and future, . . . and the gradual spread and continuing encroachments of the reign of Insipidity in his own land—and for what end? To crush a petty insect like Dennis, whose day, like that of all *ephemeræ*, would have come to an end soon enough in any case, or a plodding antiquary like Theobald, or a trumpery fribble like Cibber, or many others less noteworthy, and therefore less worthy of public exposure than even these. The answer to such reproaches seems clear. Where Pope mixed up personal spleen, personal resentment for affronts real or imagined, with the execution of his self-imposed duty of literary censor, he erred, and his error has avenged itself upon him severely enough. But Dulness was an enemy worthy of his steel. She is the natural foe of the true literary mind, and the true literary mind was typified in Pope more strongly than, perhaps, in any other author.' In Pope's poem, all the folk of Grub Street—and many who were not of it, but had incurred the irritable poet's resentment—find a niche. A short specimen only must suffice here; this extract describes part of the games (the diving contest for party scribblers) instituted by the Goddess (Dulness) in honour of the proclamation of Cibber as King:

'This labour past, by Bridewell all descend,
 (As morning prayer and flagellation end)
 To where Fleet-ditch with disemboгуing streams
 Rolls the large tribute of dead dogs to Thames,
 The king of dykes! than whom no sluice of mud
 With deeper sable blots the silver flood.
 "Here strip my children! here at once leap in,
 Here prove who best can dash thro' thick and thin,
 And who the most in love of dirt excel,
 Or dark dexterity of groping well.
 Who flings most filth and wide pollutes around
 The stream, be his the Weekly Journals bound;
 A pig of lead to him who dives the best;
 A peck of coals a-piece shall glad the rest."
 In naked majesty Oldmixon¹ stands,
 And Dido-like surveys his arms and hands;
 Then sighing, thus, "And am I now three-score?
 Ah, why, ye gods, should two and two make four?"
 He said, and climbed a stranded lighter's height,

* See in Index.

Shot to the black abyss, and plunged downright.
 The Senior's judgment all the crowd admire,
 Who but to sink the deeper rose the higher.'

When we consider the bulk and quality of Pope's work, more especially if we just rise from reading 'The Rape of the Lock' or 'The Epistle to Dr. Arbuthnot,' with their perfect finish, their 'splendid diction,' their polished sarcasm, and their keen insight into certain aspects of life, we feel almost tempted to say with Johnson, 'After all this, it is surely superfluous to answer the question that has once been asked, whether Pope was a poet, otherwise than by asking in return, If Pope be not poet, where is poetry to be found?' Yet nowadays many — perhaps the majority of critics — would be ready to answer the question at once with a decided negative, and many others would give him a very low place among the poets. It is admitted on all sides that he is a superlatively dexterous versifier, that he is always clever, and at his best exceedingly vigorous; but, on the other hand, we are told that he 'does not take us much below the surface of things, and does not give us the emotion of seeing things in their truth and beauty.' Yet, again, it may be urged that if indeed he lacks what we are accustomed to look for in the poets — 'inspiration, lofty sentiment, the heroic soul, chivalrous devotion, the inner eye of faith, etc.' — he at least chose subjects which he could treat without the possession of these qualities. 'As truly as Shakespeare is the poet of man as God made him, dealing with great passions and minute motives,' says Lowell, 'so truly is Pope the poet of society, the delineator of manners, the exposé of those motives which may be called acquired, whose spring is in institutions and habits of pure worldly origin. In his own province he still stands unapproachably alone. If to be the greatest satirist of individual men, rather than of human nature; if to be the highest expression which the life of the court and the ball-room has ever found in verse; if to have added more phrases to our language than any other but Shakespeare; if to have charmed four generations can make a man a great poet — then he is one. He was the chief founder [rather exponent] of an artificial style of writing, which in his hands was living and powerful, because he used

it to express artificial modes of thinking, and an artificial state of society.' The 'artificial' mode of writing culminated in Pope, for, as we have said, and as we now shall see, he had no 'school' worthy of the name; but many rhymesters learned, more or less thoroughly, his tricks of style; many employed his metre and his artifices, and some poets learned much from him as to the technical handling of verse and the use of appropriate words, while the whole course of poetry since his time is indebted to him for that clearness and precision, that care and endeavour to make the sound 'the echo of the sense,' of which Dryden was the first great exponent and Pope the first great master.

It is evident, however, that greatly as Pope was admired in his own time, many were far from feeling that his was the only kind of poetry. Foremost among these is James Thomson.

Thomson's first considerable poem, 'Winter,' appeared in 1726; in it he struck at once the note which James Thomson distinguishes him from most of his contemporaries, and which makes the work remarkable, apart from its poetic merits, which are very considerable. The acquaintance with Nature herself, and not with mere conventional descriptions of nature, finds a place once more in our literature, and a larger one than had hitherto ever been the case. 'Excepting the "Nocturnal Reverie" of Lady Winchelsea,² and a passage or two in the "Windsor Forest" of Pope,' says Wordsworth, 'the poetry of the period intervening between the publication of the "Paradise Lost" of Milton, and the "Seasons," does not contain a single new image of external nature, and scarcely presents a familiar one from which it can be inferred that the eye of the poet had

¹ Thomson's uneventful life may be summed up in a sentence or two. He was the son of a Roxburghshire minister, who designed him for the Church. After finishing his education at Edinburgh University, he came to London, and was a private tutor at the time when he was engaged on 'The Seasons' (1726). He travelled on the Continent with another pupil, whose father (Lord Chancellor Talbot) subsequently obtained for him a small Government appointment. This he lost on Talbot's death in 1737, but received a sinecure governorship of the Leeward Islands some seven years later. He died in 1748, having been the friend of many of the chief literary men of his day. Collins' ode on his death, beginning 'In yonder grave a Druid lies,' is the best fruit of one of these friendships.

² See Index.

been steadily fixed upon the object, much less that 'his feelings had urged him to work upon it in the spirit of genuine imagination.' To Thomson, then, this, among other praises, must certainly be given; to him we must trace that love of external nature and of the careful observation thereof which finds so large a place in our later poetry, and which had become, indeed, one of the special characteristics or elements of English poetry even before the full revival of romanticism in the last quarter of the eighteenth century.

The "Seasons" was finished in 1730;¹ it is written in blank verse, of which the following is a fair specimen—it is part of the description of the autumn storm that, 'defeating oft the labours of the year,' devastates the harvest crops:

' Exposed and naked to its utmost rage,
Through all the sea of harvest rolling round;
The billowy plain floats wide; nor can evade,
Though pliant to the blast, its seizing force—
O! whirled in air, or into vacant chaff
Shook waste. And sometimes, too, a burst of rain,
Swept from the black horizon, broad, descends
In one continuous flood. Still over head
The mingling tempest weaves its gloom, and still
The deluge deepens, till the fields around
Lie sunk and flatted in the sordid wave.
Sudden, the ditches swell; the meadows swim.
Red, from the hill, innumerable streams
Tumultuous roar, and high above its bank
The river lift; before whose rushing tide
Herds, flocks, and harvests, cottages, and swains,
Roll mingled down—all that the winds had spared,
In one wild moment ruined.'

Thomson's blank verse is, as Johnson points out, peculiarly his own: 'His blank verse is no more the blank verse of Milton or of any other poet than the rhymes of Prior are the rhymes of Cowley. His numbers, his pauses, his diction are of his own growth, without transcription, without imitation.' As regards his diction, however, he is often charged with the use of cumbrous Latinisms in his endeavours to be stately; but it is doubtful whether in this respect he does more than use the conventional poetic language of the day.

Thomson's other most important work is 'The Castle of

¹ Winter, 1726; Summer, 1727; Spring, 1728; Autumn, 1730.

'Indolence' (1746), an allegorical poem written in the Spenserian stanza, which has somewhat the same sort of relation to the romantic element in the later 'The Castle of Indolence.' poetry of the century, as 'The Seasons' has to what is known as naturalism. The poem is in two cantos, the first dealing with the delights of the Castle, the second with the feats of 'the Knights of Art and Industry.' The language of the poem is meant to be archaic, and the writer endeavours to use simple words as far as possible. Here are a couple of stanzas from the opening part, describing the Castle:—

' Full in the passage of the vale above,
A sable, silent, solemn forest stood,
Where nought but shadowy forms was seen to move,
As Idlesse fancied in her dreaming mood ;
And up the hills, on either side, a wood
Of blackening pines, aye waving to and fro,
Sent forth a sleepy horror through the blood ;
And where this valley winded out below,
The murmuring main was heard, and scarcely heard, to flow.

' A pleasing land of drowsyhede it was,
Of dreams that wave before the half-shut eye ;
And of gay castles in the clouds that pass
For ever flushing round a summer sky :
There eke the soft delights that witchingly
Instil a wanton sweetness through the breast ;
And the calm pleasures always hovered nigh ;
But whate'er smacked of noynance or unrest
Was far, far off expelled from this delicious nest.'

Having considered the works of the two chief poets of the first half of the eighteenth century, and seen the different provinces of art each of these great but limited writers took for his own, we may profitably glance at some of the lesser writers of the time before turning to the study of the work of Collins and Gray, with which we conclude this chapter.

Minor Poets
contemporary
with Pope.

Addison is much more important to us as prose-writer than poet ; yet, as the latter, he was honoured in his own generation, and is looked upon by some competent critics as forming a connecting link in point of style between Dryden (whose sovereignty in the world of letters he in a measure succeeded to) and

Addison.

See p. 518.

Pope. His verse is correct, even, and frigid; his style of handling his subject wearisome, and his creative power *nil*. His 'Account of the Principal English Poets' is after the fashion of Roscommon, Mulgrave, etc.; his 'Letter from Italy' calls for no particular notice, and the poem on the 'Campaign' must have made his fortune more from its value to the Whig party than from any merits of its own. His admirers cite as the best example of his verse that portion of the 'Campaign' which depicts Marlborough as the Almighty's avenging angel, who

'Rides in the whirlwind and directs the storm.'

His tragedy, of 'Cato' may be mentioned here. It contains striking passages, and at least two lines which have become well known—

'Tis not in mortals to command success;
But we'll do more, Sempronius—we'll deserve it!—

but it suffers from a defect fatal in a stage-play—dulness. What success it had undoubtedly was due to the writer's politics.

Garth is chronologically Dryden's successor in the use of the heroic couplet, and may, perhaps, be regarded as connecting Dryden's versification with Addison's and so with Pope's. His chief works are 'The Dispensary' (1699) and 'Claremont' (1715). The former is a mock heroic poem on the subject of the opposition of certain doctors to the resolution of the College of Physicians enjoining them to give free medical aid to the poor. 'Claremont' is a topographical, descriptive poem of the 'Cooper's Hill' species.

Prior's first notable work in literature was a caricature of Dryden's 'Hind and the Panther,' which he wrote in conjunction with Montague. This was called 'The Country Mouse and the City Mouse.' His enduring fame, however, does not rest on this amusing 'skit,' or on his more ambitious works, 'Solomon,' the 'Carmen Seculare,' 'Alma,' etc.: he is valued for his graceful society verse, his delicate songs, and his epigrams. He published two volumes of collected poems—one in 1709, the other in 1718. Perhaps the prettiest example of his

Sir Samuel
Garth,
1660—1710.

Matthew Prior,
1664—1721.

polished wit, most felicitous ease of expression, is his letter 'To a Child of Quality Four Years Old.' We quote it in its entirety :—

'Lords, knights, and squires, the numerous band
That wear the fair Miss Mary's letters,
Were summoned by her high command
To show their passion by their letters.

'My pen among the rest I took,
Lest those bright eyes that cannot read
Should dart their kindling fires, and look
The power they have to be obeyed.

'Nor quality, nor reputation,
Forbid me yet my flame to tell ;
Dear five-years-old befriends my passion,
And I may write till she can spell.

'For, while she makes her silk-worms beds
With all the tender things I swear ;
Whilst all the house my passion reads
In papers round her baby's hair ;

'She may receive and own my flame ;
For, though the strictest prude should know it,
She'll pass for a most virtuous dame,
And I for an unhappy poet.

'Then, too, alas ! when she shall tear
The lines some younger rival sends ;
She'll give me leave to write, I fear,
And we shall still continue friends.

'For, as our different ages move,
'Tis so ordained (would Fate but mend it !)
That I shall be past making love,
When she begins to comprehend it.'

Gay first makes his appearance as a poet with 'Rural Sports' (1711), a moderate achievement dedicated to Pope. It was at Pope's suggestion that he burlesqued Ambrose Philips' pastorals in his 'Shepherd's Week' (1714), a work far superior to its original. His 'Trivia ; or, The Art of Walking the Streets of London,' followed this, two years later, and was very popular ; but more highly esteemed now are the 'Fables,' whose publication began in 1727. The next year was acted his 'Beggars' Opera,' which, according to Johnson (whose authority for the facts is Spence), arose out of Swift's remark that 'a

John Gay,
1693—1732.

Newgate Pastoral might make an odd pretty sort of thing.' The play achieved great and unexpected success: 'written in ridicule of the musical Italian drama, it was first offered to Cibber and his brethren at Drury Lane, and rejected; it being then carried to Rich [manager of Covent Garden Theatre], had the effect, as was ludicrously said, of making Gay rich, and Rich gay.' The play is sprightly and amusing, but not remarkable for great literary merits, though the dialogue and songs are very clever, and some of the latter pretty, as, for instance, the one sung by Lucy on parting from Macheath:

'I, like the fox shall grieve,
Whose mate hath left her side;
Whom hounds from morn to eve,
Chase o'er the country wide.

'Where can my lover hide?
Where cheat the weary pack?
If love be not his guide,
He never will come back.'

Ambrose Philips, one of Addison's satellites, and the butt of Gay and Pope, wrote besides the 'Pastorals' already mentioned, 'Persian Tales,' several plays, and some short poems. A volume of these last, published in 1748, was ridiculed (more severely than they deserved) under the jeering title of *Namby-Pamby*, a word which has conferred an unpleasing immortality on the poet. Tickell, another of the 'little senate,' is chiefly notable as the author of the version of the first book of the 'Iliad' which so excited Pope's anger, and as the writer of a fine elegy on the death of his beloved Addison. Swift's verse calls for passing notice. It is fluent, easy, and pointed, and though rarely rising to anything like poetry, it is always easy to read. In a set of verses which he wrote on his own supposed death, he has given an estimate of himself which is highly interesting. He allows that he 'had too much satire in his vein,' but

'... malice never was his aim;
He lashed the vice, but spared the name;

No individual could resent,
Where thousands equally were meant;
His satire points at no defect
But what all mortals may correct;
True genuine dulness moved his pity,
Unless it offered to be witty.'

Parnell's name is preserved chiefly by one poem, 'The Hermit,' a story told in very excellent manner and fine couplets. His 'Odes' seem to deserve much more attention than they receive.

Thomas
Parnell,
1679—1718.

Turning from these to some somewhat later minor poets, we come to Ramsay, whose 'Gentle Shepherd' (1725) 'brought back real pastoral poetry to literature.'

Allan
Ramsay,
1686—1763.

Ramsay collected and published Scotch songs, and it may be that from these Thomson, who was doubtless familiar with them, found encouragement in his rejection of convention for nature.

A companion of Thomson's was Mallock, or Mallet, as he preferred to call himself. Johnson justly remarks of him that 'as a writer he cannot be placed in any high class.' His ballad of 'William and Margaret' (1724), is interesting as another evidence of the fact that the younger men were turning to simpler treatment and less pompous themes than were then common. Mallet, in his blank verse 'Excursion,' imitated Thomson; among his dramatic pieces is the masque of 'Britannia,' written with the collaboration of Thomson. It is remarkable on account of one song which it contains, probably written by Mallet alone: this is 'Rule, Britannia.'

David
Mallet,
1700-63.

Another minor poet, who was a friend of Thomson's, is Armstrong, whose portrait is to be found in the 'Castle of Indolence,' to which, it is said, he contributed some few stanzas. Armstrong, who was a doctor, wrote a blank verse poem, 'The Art of Preserving Health' (1644), which shows the influence of his friend.

John Arm-
strong,
1702-76.

It is curious to notice the variety of subjects treated of by the poets of the time, and the obvious dissatisfaction with the heroic distich as the one fit mode of poetic expression. Thus, in

the same year as Thomson's 'Winter' appeared, we have in Dyer's 'Grongar Hill' a poem which is the work of John Dyer: one who went for his inspiration to Nature and to Milton. Whatever harsh things may be said of the verse of the eighteenth century, and of the artificiality and conventionality of the so-called age of prose and reason, we may be sure they do not apply to Dyer. An imaginative feeling for nature, such as we scarcely reach till we get to Wordsworth himself, combines with the skilful handling of a dainty metre to form a remarkably fascinating poem; even from but a few lines some idea of the merits of 'Grongar Hill' may be formed:

' And see the rivers, how they run,
Thro' woods and meads, in shade and sun,
Sometimes swift, sometimes slow,
Wave succeeding wave, they go
A various journey to the deep,
Like human life to endless sleep!
Thus is Nature's vesture wrought,
To instruct our wandering thought;
This she dresses green and gay,
To disperse our cares away.'

Dyer's other chief work is a poem in blank verse, published in 1747; it is called 'The Fleece,' and deals with its subject from the sheep to the carpet.

A poet of an earlier generation, who did not, however, begin to write till middle age, is Somerville, William Somerville: whose blank-verse description of hunting, dogs, horses, and so forth appeared in 1734, under the title of 'The Chase.'

A pleasant, cheerful poem, in the Hudibrastic metre that Swift handled so easily, and written somewhat after Swift's fashion, is 'The Spleen' of Matthew Green: This was first published in the year 1696-1737. of the author's death. Green had a post in the Custom House, and wrote little, and that for his own diversion; thus he says, in his easy fashion,

'I only transient visits pay,
Meeting the Muses in my way,
Scarce known to the fastidious dames,
Nor skilled to call them by their names,

Nor can their passports in these days
 Your profit warrant or your praise.
 On Poems by their dictates writ,
 Critics, as sworn appraisers, sit,
 And mere upholsterers in a trice
 On gems and painting set a price.
 These tailoring artists for our lays
 Invent cramped rules, and with strait stays
 Striving free Nature's shape to hit,
 Emaciate sense, before they fit.'

Byrom may just be mentioned as an overflowing rhymester, who seems to have made it the business of his life to show that verse could be used in describing subjects for which it is most unfit. 'He prattled incessantly,' says Mr. Henley, 'and always in numbers. . . . It was in metre that he anatomized beaux and astrologers, made fables and apologues and epigrams, criticised verses and theologies, spoke breaking-up addresses, painted the free and happy workman, and set forth the kindred mysteries of poesy and shorthand.' It is not uninteresting to notice in an exaggerated case like Byrom's the way in which the range of subjects for verse was being enlarged. 'Now, Muse, we'll sing of rats,' is said to have been a poetic outpouring of James Grainger : Dr. Grainger, who, in his 'Sugarcane,' published 1723-1767. in 1764 a blank-verse description of West Indian sugar culture. We have mentioned Grainger somewhat before his time—not that it much matters where such an insignificant person is mentioned—and we must turn back to glance at the works of abler verse-writers. Glover's 'Admiral Hosier's Ghost' is a ballad in a swinging trochaic metric. It was written in 1739, and commemorates Richard Glover : a gallant sailor, who is said to have died of a broken heart ; he had lost many of his men by disease while on duty in the West Indies, being sent to overawe the Spaniards, but not being allowed to attack them. The ghost is supposed to tell his pitiful story to the victorious Admiral Vernon, after the latter's defeat of the Spaniards off Portobello :

'I, by twenty sail attended,
 Did this Spanish town affright ;
 Nothing then its wealth defended
 But my orders not to fight.

O ! that in the rolling ocean
 I had cast them with disdain,
 And obeyed my heart's warm motion,
 To have quelled the pride of Spain.

' For resistance I could fear none,
 But with twenty ships had done
 What thou, brave and happy Vernon,
 Hast achieved with six alone.
 Then the Bastimentos never
 Had our foul dishonour seen,
 Nor the sea the sad receiver
 Of this gallant train had been.'

Glover's more ambitious works are but little valued now. His 'Leonidas' (1737) is a blank-verse epic in twelve books, to which the 'Athenaid' (published after his death) is a sequel. Another of his works is a poem called 'London,' written in 1739, with the object—like Hosier's Ghost—of inflaming the public against Spain.

The year before, a more famous poem with the same name had been published by a new writer. This was Johnson, whose life and writings will demand some share of our attention later on, but with whose poems alone we deal in this chapter. The chief of these are the above-mentioned satire, 'London' (which appeared on the same morning as Pope's satire '1738,' and surpassed the latter in popularity), and 'The Vanity of Human Wishes,' 1749. Both of these satires are based on Juvenal, and are written in Pope's manner. But there is a stateliness in his verse and a dignity in his scorn, free from the petty personal spite that informs Pope, for which he owes nothing either to his Latin or his English model. 'You see in it,' says a critic speaking of 'London,' 'a mind purer and sterner than Dryden's, Pope's, or Churchill's, or even Juvenal's; "doing well to be angry" with a degenerate age, and a false, cowardly country, of which he deems himself unworthy to be a citizen. If there is rather too much of the *saeva indignatio*, which Swift speaks of as lacerating his heart, it is a nobler and less selfish ire than his, and the language and verse which it inspires are full of the very soul of dignity. In the "Vanity of Human Wishes" he becomes one of those hunters "whose game is man"; and from assailing premiers, parliaments, and

Johnson's
 poems.

the vices of London and England, he passes, in a very solemn spirit, to expose the vain hopes, wishes, and efforts of humanity. . . . The portraits of Wolsey, Bacon, and Charles XII. are admirable in their execution, and in their adaptation to the argument of the piece.' The specimen we give is from 'The Vanity of Human Wishes.' In one passage he warns the youthful enthusiast for knowledge that, even though Virtue guard him and Reason guide him, even though Novelty, Beauty, or Sloth should not distract him, yet will there be much sorrow in store for him :—

'Should no disease thy torpid veins invade,
Nor Melancholy's phantoms haunt thy shade ;
Yet hope not life from grief or danger free,
Nor think the doom of man reversed for thee.

'Deign on the passing world to turn thine eyes,
And pause awhile from learning, to be wise ;
There mark what ills the scholar's life assail,
Toil, envy, want, the patron, and the jail.
See nations, slowly wise and meanly just,
To buried merit raise the tardy bust ;
If dreams yet flatter, once again attend,
Hear Lydiat's life and Galileo's end.'

Johnson's minor poems call for but little notice, though the 'Prologue,' which he wrote for Goldsmith's 'Good-Natured Man,' has been highly praised. Some of the verses on the death of his old friend and dependent, Levett (1782), are extremely pathetic ; three stanzas we give here :—

'In Misery's darkest cavern known,
His useful care was ever nigh ;
Where hopeless Anguish poured his groan,
And lonely Want retired to die.¹

'No summons mocked by chill delay ;
No petty gain disdained by pride ;
The modest wants of every day,
The toil of every day supplied.

'His virtues walked their narrow round,
Nor made a pause, nor left a void ;
And sure the Eternal Master found
His single talent well employed.'

¹ Levett was a doctor who gave his skill to the poor.

'Sir, we are a nest of singing birds,' said Johnson, speaking of Pembroke College. One of that college's 'singing birds' was Shenstone, the author of 'The School-mistress.' This poem, published in 1742 (four years before 'The Castle of Indolence'), is in the Spenserian stanza, and shows a longing on the part of the author to turn from the popular models of his day, both in regard to manner and matter. He tries to give a good picture of village life and to describe nature as it is, but it must be admitted that all his work strikes the nineteenth century as highly artificial. His ballad 'Jemmy Dawson' (1746), on the hanging of one of the Manchester rebels, is written with studied simplicity, and is meant to be extremely pathetic. Yet it seems to be little less than ludicrous, and it is impossible, with the best will in the world, 'to heave a sigh,' far more to 'shed a tear,' over his hero. These are the two concluding verses of the ballad. 'Young Dawson' being hanged—

'The dismal scene was o'er and past,
The lover's mournful hearse retired ;
The maid drew back her languid head,
And, sighing forth his name, expired.

'Though justice ever must prevail,
The tear my Kitty sheds is due ;
For seldom shall she hear a tale
So sad, so tender, and so true.'

Yet, if the ballad is poor, it is interesting to note Shenstone's earnest attempt to reach a method of which he but vaguely saw the outline. He is thoroughly artificial, but he tries not to be so. The best of his work, perhaps, is the 'Pastoral Ballad' (1743); this consists of four poems commemorating his love for Phyllis, called respectively 'Absence,' 'Hope,' 'Solicitude,' and 'Disappointment.' When Phyllis and Corydon appear in a poem we are not annoyed by artificiality, and the shepherd of taste talking in polished phrases and delicate metre is then pleasing enough. Here are three stanzas from 'Disappointment':

'Ye shepherds, give ear to my lay,
And take no more heed of my sheep ;
They have nothing to do, but to stray ;
I have nothing to do, but to weep.

Yet do not my folly reprove ;
 She was fair—and my passion begun ;
 She smiled—and I could not but love ;
 She is faithless—and I am undone.

'Perhaps I was void of all thought ;
 Perhaps it was plain to foresee
 That a nymph so complete should be sought
 By a swain more engaging than me.
 Ah ! love ev'ry hope can inspire :
 It banishes wisdom the while ;
 And the lips of the nymph we admire
 Seem for ever adorned with a smile.

'She is faithless—and I am undone ;
 Ye that witness the woes I endure,
 Let reason instruct you to shun
 What it cannot instruct you to cure.
 Beware how ye loiter in vain
 Amid nymphs of an higher degree ;
 It is not for me to explain
 How fair and how fickle they be.'

In the year that Shenstone's 'Schoolmistress' was being published appeared the first portion of Young's 'Night Thoughts.' The series of poems embraced by this title was completed in 1744. It consists of nine books, of which eight constitute 'The Complaint,' and the last 'The Consolation.' Young's wife, his stepdaughter, and her husband, had died within a few years of one another, and the poem gives in blank verse his gloomy reflections on 'Life, Death, and Immortality.' The following lines, which occur in the last book ('Consolation'), give some idea of the scope of the work :

'Through many a field of moral and divine
 The Muse has strayed ; and much of sorrow seen
 In human ways ; and much of false and vain,
 Which none, who travel this bad road, can miss.
 O'er friends deceased full heartily she wept ;
 Of love divine the wonders she displayed ;
 Proved man immortal ; showed the source of joy ;
 The grand tribunal raised ; assigned the bounds
 Of human grief : in few, to close the whole,
 The moral muse has shadowed out a sketch,
 Though not in form, not with a Raphael's stroke
 Of most our weakness need believe, or do,
 In this our land of travail, and of hope,
 For peace on earth, or prospect of the skies.'

A much earlier work of Young's than the 'Night Thoughts' is his poem on 'The Last Day' (1713), written in heroic couplets. Among the large amount of his other writings—odes, lyrics, tragedies, essays, etc.—we need only mention 'The Universal Passion' (1725-28), consisting of seven satires in neat couplets. The best of these satires, however—those 'On Women,' the fifth and sixth—are sufficiently like Pope's epistle 'On the Characters of Women' (written after Young's) to have caused them to be little read.

Gloomier than Young's 'Night Thoughts' is a poem by Robert Blair, entitled 'The Grave.' It consists of about eight hundred lines of blank verse—the lines having often, as in the dramatists, an extra syllable—and dwells with a sort of morbid enjoyment on the horrors of the tomb. 'What is this world?' he cries—

'What but a spacious burial-field unwall'd,
Strew'd with death's spoils, the spoils of animas
Savage and tame, and full of dead men's bones,
The very turf on which we tread once liv'd,
And we that live must lend our carcases
To cover our own offspring——'

Another poet who is known to us mainly by one work is Akenside, the author of 'The Pleasures of Imagination,' a blank-verse didactic poem, completed (in its first form) in 1744. The design of his work, he tells us, is 'to give a view of the pleasures of imagination in the largest acceptation of the term; so that, whatever our imagination feels from the agreeable appearances of nature, and all the various entertainment we meet with either in poetry, painting, music, or any of the elegant arts, might be deducible from one or other of those principles in the constitution of the human mind which are here established and explained.' Akenside subsequently enlarged without improving this poem, and he wrote a number of odes and other pieces, which call for no notice.

Smart is the last of the smaller poets whom we shall look at before we pass to Collins and Gray. He was the author of a considerable amount of verse, collected and published after his death in 1791. These are admitted to be of very trifling merit, and we may

neglect them. Curiously enough, his fame now rests on a poem which his editor omitted as being worthless: it is the 'Song to David,' written during one of Smart's lucid intervals, at the time of his life when he was confined in a madhouse — 'There is nothing,' Mr. T. H. Ward declares, 'like the "Song to David" in the eighteenth century; there is nothing out of which it might seem to have been developed. It is true that, with great appearance of symmetry, it is ill-arranged and out of proportion; its hundred stanzas weary the reader with their repetitions and with their epithets piled up on a too obvious system. But, in spite of this touch of pedantry, it is the work of a poet, of a man so possessed with the beauty and fervour of the Psalms and with the high romance of the psalmist's life, that in the days of his madness the character of David had become a "fixed idea" with him, to be embodied in words and dressed in the magic robe of verse when the dark hour had gone by. There are few episodes in our literary history more interesting than this of the wretched bookseller's hack, with his mind thrown off its balance by drink and poverty, rising at the instant of his deepest distress to a pitch of poetic performance unimagined by himself at all other times, unimagined by all but one or two of his contemporaries, and so little appreciated by the public that when an edition of his writings was called for it was sent into the world with this masterpiece omitted.' The few verses from this poem which we can find room for here describe the inspired singer:

'He sung of God—the mighty Source
Of all things—the stupendous Force
On which all strength depends;
From whose right arm, beneath whose eyes
All period, power and enterprise
Commences, reigns, and ends.

'Angels—their ministry and meed,
Which to and fro with blessings speed,
Or with their citterns wait;
Where Michael with his millions bows,
Where dwells the seraph and his spouse.
The cherub and her mate.

'Of man—the semblance and effect
Of God and love—the saint elect
For infinite applause—

To rule the land, and briny broad,
To be laborious in his laud,
And heroes in his cause.

'The world—the clustering spheres He made,
The glorious light, the soothing shade,
Dale, champaign, grove and hill ;
The multitudinous abyss,
Where secrecy remains in bliss,
And wisdom hides her skill.

A greater poet than Smart, who, like him, ended his days in madness, is now to be dealt with. This is William Collins. Collins was the son of a Chichester tradesman. After education in his native town and at Winchester, he went to Oxford, where he entered Queen's College, and subsequently migrated to Magdalen. His 'Persian Eclogues' (subsequently called 'Oriental Eclogues') were published in 1742 and his 'Odes' in 1747. He had come to London in 1744, and about that time made the acquaintance of Johnson, whose short account of him is one of the best of the 'Lives.' He formed a close friendship with Thomson, on whose death he wrote an ode (1749). The same year he wrote his 'Ode on the Superstitions of the Highlands,' which was not printed till 1780. The last years of his life were clouded by insanity.

Collins' fame rests on his 'Odes,' and for them in his own time he got little praise. It is as a lyric poet, as a 'singer' pure and simple, that he stands out from among his contemporaries, and he claims a right to rank high among the great lyrists. 'In the little book of odes which dropped, a still-born immortal, from the press, and was finally burnt up even to the last procurable copy by the hands of its author in a fever-fit of angry despair, there was,' says Mr. Swinburne, 'hardly a single false note; and there were not many less than sweet or strong. There was, above all things, a purity of music, a clarity of style, to which I know of no parallel in English verse from the death of Marvell to the birth of William Blake. Here, in the twilight which followed on that splendid sunset of Pope, was at last a poet who was content to sing out what he had in him—to sing and not to say, without a glimpse of wit or a flash of eloquence.' In the 'little book' of 1747, here mentioned, the longest and

most ambitious poem is the 'Ode to Liberty,' which contains fine passages; a much shorter one shows Collins in a light that suited him better. This is the 'Ode' (as he calls it) written in 1746 (after the crushing of the '45):

'How sleep the brave who sink to rest
By all their country's wishes blessed !
When spring, with dewy fingers cold,
Returns to deck their hallowed mould,
She there shall dress a sweeter sod
Than fancy's feet have ever trod.

By fairy hands their knell is rung ;
By forms unseen their dirge is sung ;
Their Honour dwells, a pilgrim grey,
To bless the turf that wraps their clay ;
And Freedom shall awhile repair,
To dwell, a weeping hermit, there.'

The 'Ode to the Passions' and the 'Ode to Evening' are reckoned among his finest compositions. In the first of these the poet tells how,

'When Music, heavenly maid, was young,
While yet in early Greece she sung,'

the Passions thronged round her, and, inspired and maddened by her strains, snatched up instruments that each might 'prove his own expressive power.' Here is, perhaps, the most beautiful stanza :

'But thou, O Hope, with eyes so fair,
What was thy delightful measure ?
Still it whispered promised pleasure,
And bade the lovely scenes at distance hail
Still would her touch the strain prolong ;
And from the rocks, the woods, the vale
She called on Echo still through all the song ;
And where her sweetest theme she chose,
A soft responsive voice was heard at every close,
And Hope, enchanted, smiled and waved her golden hair.'

The poem recalls to us Dryden's 'Ode on St. Cecilia's Day,' and reminds us how much purer and sweeter than the greater writer's is Collins' strain of song. The 'Ode to Evening' some critics incline to think his best work; it is a short piece (52 lines) of uniform poetic excellence in a 'softened strain,'

'Whose numbers, stealing through thy darkening vale,
 May, not unseemly, with its stillness suit,
 As, musing slow, I hail
 Thy genial loved return !'

'Even in his own age,' says Mr. Swinburne, 'it was the fatally foolish and uncritical fashion to couple the name of Collins with that of Gray, as though they were poets of the *same order and kind*. As an *elegiac* poet, Gray holds for all ages to come his unassailable and sovereign station ; as a *lyric* poet, he is simply unworthy to sit at the feet of Collins. Whether it may not be a greater thing than ever was done by the greater lyrist, to have written a poem of such high perfection and such universal appeal to the tenderest and the noblest depths of human feeling as Gray's "Elegy," is, of course, another and a wholly irrelevant question.'

Gray was born in Cornhill (London), his father being engaged in business in the City. His mother's brother
 Thomas Gray:
 1710-1771. was a master at Eton, and there the poet passed his school-days, quitting it in 1734 for Cambridge, where he entered at Peterhouse. On leaving Cambridge, he went for a tour on the Continent with Horace Walpole, his former school-fellow ; they had a quarrel at Florence and separated, Gray returning to England in 1741. Shortly after this his father died, and Gray, abandoning his idea of practising law, returned to Cambridge. Here he passed the rest of his life. In 1742 his dear friend Richard West, son of the Lord Chancellor of Ireland, died, and it is about this time that Gray's poetical writings begin. The first of these was the 'Ode to Spring,' which was sent to West, who died before it reached him ; then followed 'Ode on a Distant Prospect of Eton College' (which contains a touching allusion to his friend's death), and the 'Ode to Adversity.' His best-known work, the 'Elegy written in a Country Church-yard,' was printed in 1751, and became immediately popular, going through four editions in two months. In 1754 he wrote the 'Progress of Poesy' and 'The Bard,' both of which were published in 1757. He was in this year offered the Poet-Laureateship, which he, however, declined. He had now left Peterhouse, in consequence of some tricks that had been played upon him, and migrated to Pembroke, of which

his friend and future editor and biographer, Mason,¹ was a fellow. He applied in vain to Lord Bute, in 1762, for the vacant Professorship of History, but it was bestowed on him six years later by the Duke of Grafton, on whose installation as Chancellor of the University he composed his 'Ode for Music.' Two years later he died (1771). 'Perhaps he was the most learned man in Europe,' says a friend of his. 'He was equally acquainted with the elegant and profound parts of science, and that not superficially, but thoroughly. He knew every branch of history, both natural and civil; had read all the original historians of England, France and Italy; and was a great antiquarian. Criticism, metaphysics, morals, politics, made a principal part of his study; voyages and travels of all sorts were his favourite amusements; and he had a fine taste in painting, prints, architecture, and gardening.'

The writer from whom the last few sentences are quoted goes on to say, 'Perhaps it may be said, What signifies so much knowledge, when it produced so little? Is it worth taking so much pains to leave no memorial but a few poems?' and he proceeds to show that 'Mr. Gray was to others at least innocently employed; to himself certainly beneficially.' The scantiness of Gray's literary production is very remarkable, and not less so is the fine quality of nearly all he has written. Matthew Arnold's explanation of Gray's sterility is that he 'fell upon an age of prose . . . an age whose task was such as to call forth in general men's powers of understanding, wit, and cleverness, rather than their deepest powers of mind and soul.' However this may be—and certainly the explanation seems insufficient—we find that Gray takes his scarce disputed place among our classics by virtue of a very small amount of very exquisite work. With regard to which of his poems is the master-piece, varying opinions are held. The reading public in general would certainly decide (and perhaps rightly) for the 'Elegy': yet Gray himself was not of that opinion, declaring that 'the

¹ William Mason (1725-1797) achieved considerable reputation as a poet in his time, but his works are of very little value. 'Mosses' (on the death of Pope) is interesting as an imitation of Milton's 'Lycidas.' His 'English Garden' (1772) is a blank-verse poem; his 'Elfrida' and ' Caractacus ' are tragedies.

"Elegy" owed its popularity entirely to the subject, and that the public would have received it as well if it had been written in prose.' Undoubtedly the poem owes some of its immediate success to the cause Gray refers to, but its permanent value is due to the matchless way in which the poet has embodied 'images which find a mirror in every mind and sentiments to which every bosom returns an echo,' to the extreme beauty of its simple, dignified language, and to its perfect form. It is scarcely necessary to quote from a poem so familiar to all readers, yet we cannot withstand the temptation to repeat here a few stanzas :

- 'Perhaps in this neglected spot is laid
Some heart once pregnant with celestial fire ;
Hands that the rod of empire might have swayed,
Or waked to ecstasy the living lyre.
- 'But knowledge to their eyes her ample page
Rich with the spoils of time did ne'er unroll ;
Chill penury repressed their noble rage,
And froze the genial current of the soul.
- 'Full many a gem of purest ray serene
The dark unfathomed caves of ocean bear :
Full many a flower is born to blush unseen,
And waste its sweetness on the desert air.
- 'Some village Hampden, that with dauntless breast,
The little tyrant of his fields withstood,
Some mute inglorious Milton here may rest,
Some Cromwell guiltless of his country's blood.'

The odes are less popular than the 'Elegy'; the favourite one is that in which the poet describes his feelings on re-visiting Eton, and ends with a verse whose last sentence has become a proverb:

- 'To each his sufferings : all are men
Condemned alike to groan ;
The tender for another's pain,
The unfeeling for his own.
Yet ah ! why should they know their fate,
Since sorrow never comes too late,
And happiness too swiftly flies ?
Thought would destroy their paradise.
No more—where ignorance is bliss
'Tis folly to be wise.'

'The Progress of Poesy' is a fine ode, from which we

quote the concluding stanzas, which pay noble tribute to Milton and to Dryden, from the latter of whom Gray professed to have learned his own skill in verse :

'Nor second He, that rode sublime
Upon the seraph-wings of ecstasy
The secrets of th' abyss to spy.
He passed the flaming bounds of place and time ;
The living throne, the sapphire blaze,
Where angels tremble while they gaze,
He saw ; but, blasted with excess of light,
Closed his eyes in endless night.
Behold where Dryden's less presumptuous car,
Wide o'er the fields of glory bear
Two coursers of ethereal race
With necks in thunder clothed, and long resounding pace.

'Hark his hands the lyre explore ;
Bright-eyed Fancy, hovering o'er,
Scatters from her pictured urn
Thoughts that breathe, and words that burn.
But ah ! 'tis heard no more.—
Oh lyre divine, what daring spirit
Wakes thee now ! Tho' he inherit
Nor the pride, nor ample pinion,
That the Theban eagle bear,
Sailing with supreme dominion
Thro' the azure deep of air ;
Yet oft before his infant eyes would run,
Such forms as glitter in the Muse's ray,
With orient hues, unborrowed of the sun.
Yet shall he mount, and keep his distant way
Beyond the limits of a vulgar fate :
Beneath the Good how far—but far above the Great.'

Another work of Gray which we must not omit to mention is 'The Bard,' described as 'a Pindaric ode.' It is founded on the legend of the slaughter of the Welsh bards by Edward I. on his conquest of Wales. 'The bard' of the poem, before throwing himself 'headlong from the mountain's height,' laments over his slaughtered brethren, and foretells the ruin of Edward's race. Two fine odes taken from Norse mythology are also among Gray's poems. One of these is 'The Fatal Sisters,' describing the three weird goddesses of fate weaving the doom of warriors. The other, 'The

Descent of Odin,' tells how the 'king of men' went down to the nether world to 'Hela's drear abode' to learn from the prophetess what dangers awaited his beloved son Balder.

CHAPTER XXVIII

EIGHTEENTH-CENTURY POETS—FROM GOLDSMITH TO COWPER.

Nullum quod tetigit non ornavit appears in Goldsmith's epitaph written by his loving friend Johnson; and for once, at least, an epitaph goes little beyond the truth; for Goldsmith, who has given us prose of all kinds, comedies and poems, may truly be said to have achieved great distinction in each of these branches of literature. We leave his prose to a later chapter, and deal here with the rest of his work.

Goldsmith's first published poem was 'The Traveller,' which appeared in 1764. It received what was then considered the highest commendation possible, being praised as the best poem which had appeared since the death of Pope. The remark immediately suggests a sort of comparison with the earlier poet, and it is a comparison not uninteresting to make.

'The Traveller' is a didactic poem, and it is written in the classic couplet: those are the most obvious points of resemblance. It is pensive and descriptive, it is not filled with antitheses and brilliant epigrams, and it is to a great extent free from the artificial diction which had become by Pope's influence the conventional language of poetry: these are some of the more obvious points of difference. He accepted Pope as his exemplar in the technical art of versification, and he derides 'the mistaken efforts of the learned to improve it.' He has no sympathy with the forms of art that Collins and Gray had introduced, or with those of earlier English poetry that certain men of letters were about this time holding up for approval and imitation. 'What criticisms,' he says,¹

¹ Dedication of 'The Traveller' (to his brother, the Rev. Henry Goldsmith).

'have we not heard of late in favour of blank verse and Pindaric odes, choruses, anapæsts and iambics, alliterative verse and happy negligence?' He, for his part, abides by the old 'heroic' couplet, and to that extent he is Pope's pupil; but it is in his fresh, clear, truthful descriptions of natural scenery that we note in him one of the tendencies of the best poets of the last half of the seventeenth century. We do not need to be reminded that Goldsmith had himself visited the scenes he describes when we read 'The Traveller' and 'The Deserted Village.' There is not that close communion with Nature that we find in some later poets, but at least there is fidelity to her as far as the poet's powers admit.

The contents of 'The Traveller' are fairly well described by its sub-title, 'A Prospect of Society.' A passage, in which is set out the philosophic thesis which the poet is supporting, will serve for a fair specimen of the poem:

'Nature, a mother kind alike to all,
Still grants her bliss at labour's earnest call;
With food as well the peasant is supplied
On Idra's cliffs as Arno's shelvy side;
And though the rocky-crested summits frown,
These rocks, by custom, turn to beds of down.
From art more various are the blessings sent,
Wealth, commerce, honour, liberty, content;
Yet these each other's power so strong contest,
That either seems destructive of the rest.
Where wealth and freedom reign, contentment fails,
And honour sinks where commerce long prevails.
Hence every state to one loved blessing prone,
Conforms and models life to that alone.
Each to the favourite happiness attends,
And spurns the plan that aims at other ends;
Till, carried to excess in each domain,
This fav'rite good begets peculiar pain.'

It is a matter of some interest to notice that the poem is the result of journeying abroad, and is filled with contemplation of foreign lands. Purely British, on the other hand, is 'The Deserted Village,' which appeared in 1770, and is perhaps Goldsmith's most famous poem. It is longer and more elaborate than its forerunner, which in many respects it closely resembles. It abounds in charming pictures of village life as it appeared to the writer, and in plaintive,

melancholy personal reflections. Touching and pathetic as much of it is, a strain of cheerfulness runs through it, as through all Goldsmith's works, which is perhaps one reason why the reader is more apt to admire the delicate beauty of the descriptive portions than to be deeply stirred by those which are meant to move him to tears. Of sentiment and sentimentality, now beginning to take a firm hold on English writings, both in prose and verse, there is in Goldsmith's work a full share.

The poem itself is so well known that a description of it is scarcely required. 'Every schoolboy' and every school-girl has probably had to learn parts or the whole of it by heart, and it is one of the few beautiful poems which are not spoiled to them by the process. Its freedom from subtlety (and perhaps depth), its simple diction and melodious versification, are things which the young can enjoy, and of which their elders do not tire. The complete picture of the whole village, both in its prosperity and in its (imaginary) depopulation, does not impress us as real, but the bits of sketching of individual characters are lifelike and familiar. The village preacher, whose 'house was known to all the vagrant train;' the schoolmaster whose

' words of learned length and thundering sound
Amazed the gazing rustics ranged around ;'

the inn where the 'village statesman talked with looks profound,' are portrayed with an idealizing yet faithful pencil. Goldsmith drew what he saw, but he saw humble life in a rosy light. Luxury and the results of what we call civilization are to him (theoretically) the great evil. Here, for instance, is a picture he draws of 'the town,' which may serve to illustrate both the way in which he handles Pope's couplet, and the difference between the latter's poetical range and his own :

' If to the city sped—what waits him there ?
To see profusion that he must not share ;
To see ten thousand baneful arts combined
To pamper luxury and thin mankind ;
To see each joy the sons of pleasure know,
Extorted from his fellow-creatures' woe.
Here while the courtier glitters in brocade,
There the pale artist plies the sickly trade ;

Here, while the proud their long-drawn pomps display,
 There the black gibbet glooms beside the way.
 The dome where pleasure holds her midnight reign,
 Here, richly decked, admits the gorgeous train :
 Tumultuous grandeur crowds the blazing square,
 The rattling chariots clash, the torches glare.
 Sure scenes like these no troubles e'er annoy !
 Sure these denote one universal joy !
 Are these thy serious thoughts ? Ah ! turn thine eyes
 Where the poor, houseless, shivering female lies.'

The rest of Goldsmith's poetical writings consist of a few songs, an artificial ballad, 'Edwin and Angelina,' the very humorous 'Elegy on the Death of a Mad Dog,' and two longer pieces, the 'Haunch of Venison' and 'Retaliation,' the latter containing a series of epitaphs on his friends—Burke, Reynolds, Garrick, etc.—who are supposed to have been invited to a feast with the author, and to have sunk overcome 'under the table.'

Goldsmith's comedies — 'The Good-natured Man' and 'She Stoops to Conquer'—were produced in 1768 and 1773 respectively. The latter ranks with 'The Deserted Village' and 'The Vicar of Wakefield'¹ among his best work, while the bright humour of the dialogue and the plot, and the skill with which the characters are drawn, have enabled it to keep the stage to this day ; yet at the time when it was written Goldsmith feared, not unreasonably, that 'the undertaking a comedy *not merely sentimental* was very dangerous.'

In the year of the appearance of Goldsmith's 'Traveller,' died Churchill, who for three years had enjoyed
Charles
 Churchill: a reputation as a poet. His works are now seldom
1731-1704. read, and the neglect that has fallen upon him seems to be well deserved. His pitiable life, his untimely early death, his bitter temperament, and the barren province of verse-making he chose for his own, remind us of Oldham ; but he has little of Oldham's vigour and originality. 'The Rosciad' (1761), his most successful work, is a long satire (in the classic couplet) on various contemporary actors. It made its author famous for a time, but Johnson's dictum that 'it had a temporary currency only from its audacity of abuse,

¹ For Goldsmith's prose (and an outline of his life) see pp. 508-512.

and being filled with living names, and that it would soon sink into oblivion,' has long been fully justified. The distinguishing characteristics of his writings are brutal scurrility, excessive fluency, and a savage hatred of all forms of authority: the last, perhaps, makes him of some special interest, because, as we know, revolt against convention (and often, authority) in art and in society is a distinctive quality of the latter half of the eighteenth century. He saw at least—but so did many of his contemporaries—the feeble artificiality of much of the work of his day, though he had not the talent to find out any better way for himself. Here is a passage in which he fairly describes his own scope:

'Me whom no Muse of heavenly birth inspires,
No judgment tempers when rash genius fires:
Who boast no merit but mere knack of rhyme,
Short gleams of sense, and satire out of time,
Who cannot follow where trim Fancy leads
By prattling streams, o'er flower-empurpled meads:
Who often, but without success, have prayed
For apt alliteration's artful aid:
Who would, but cannot, with a master's skill,
Coin fine new epithets, which mean no ill—
Me, thus uncouth, thus every way unfit
For pacing pöesy, and ambling wit,
Taste with contempt beholds——'

Taste seems to have been quite in the right. Johnson gives him his due for the one quality which he certainly had, the power of writing much. 'To be sure, he is a tree that cannot produce good fruit: he only bears crabs. But, sir, a tree that produces a great many crabs is better than a tree which produces only a few.' Undoubtedly, Churchill's 'crabs' are numerous enough; besides his 'Rosciad,' there are 'Night' (1761), an attack on respectability, which he identifies with mean hypocrisy; 'The Ghost' (1762), a long octosyllabic poem containing a caricature-portrait of Johnson; 'The Prophecy of Famine' (1763), in which the above-quoted lines occur; 'The Author' (1764), 'The Candidate' (1764), and several others.

A poem by Falconer which appeared in 1762 claims some little notice. It is entitled 'The Shipwreck.'

William

Falconer:

1752-1762.

Falconer was himself a sailor, and 'what is best in his treatment of it was learnt direct from the winds,

and waves,' says Professor Dowden. There is little, however (except, perhaps, the choice of the subject of the poem), to make Falconer's work of any great interest. The critic already quoted, while giving credit to the poet for being 'a faithful and energetic narrator'—a somewhat tedious one, too, in the present writer's judgment—is bound to admit that his 'diction is the artificial diction of eighteenth-century verse handled with none of that exquisite art shown by some cultured writers of the time.' A few lines may be quoted to give some idea of Falconer's powers in descriptive narrative :

'The moment fraught with fate approaches fast,
While thronging sailors climb each quivering mast :
The ship no longer now must stem the land,
And "Hard a starboard !" is the last command.
While every suppliant voice to Heaven applies,
The prow, swift-wheeling, to the westward flies ;
Twelve sailors, on the foremast who depend,
High on the platform of the top ascend ;
Fatal retreat ! for while the plunging prow
Immerges headlong in the wave below,
Down pressed by watery weight the bowsprit bends,
And from above the stem deep-crashing rends :
Beneath her bow the floating ruins lie ;
The foremast totters, unsustained on high.'

It is not for any original poetry of his own that Percy is mentioned here ; it is his collection of older English poems that makes his name of some importance to students of the course of English literature. This book appeared in 1765, and that date is sometimes taken as the beginning of the new romantic movement in poetry. Any such date is of course arbitrary, but no doubt the attention paid to Percy's collection does show in a very definite way the interest which was reviving in forms of art different from those to which the public had so long been accustomed. Percy, indeed, altered, adapted, and patched his manuscripts to bring them into harmony to some extent with the poetic standards of the day ; but they nevertheless retained enough of their original shape to show what had been accomplished in days when writing by rule had been, it was thought, unknown, and their influence on later poetry has certainly been considerable. Among the most remarkable results of the taste of the public for older models was

Thomas
Percy :
1723-1811.

the success of Chatterton's imitations—forgery seems too harsh a name for them—of mediæval poetry.

One of Chatterton's first ventures in literature was an account of the opening of an old bridge, which ^{Thomas Chatterton: 1752-1770.} appeared in a Bristol journal. 'The ancient manuscript from which this was said to be taken had been found, Chatterton declared, in the Church of St. Mary Redcliffe, by his father. This father had been connected with the church—the poet's uncle was sexton there—and it seems that he really had 'conveyed' and preserved certain old MSS. These, when they fell into his son's hands, excited his curiosity and his imitative nature. The Bristol antiquaries—antiquaries have ever been a simple race—were easily taken in, and 'Turgot's Account of Bristol, translated by T. Rowley out of Saxon into English,' 'The Dethe of Syr Charles Bawdin,' and 'Ælla,' a tragedy, were received as the genuine 'remains' of the fifteenth-century Rowley. Encouraged by his success, Chatterton began to find the attorney's office, in which he was, intolerably irksome. He determined to abandon it, and devote himself to the production of 'mediæval' MSS. He seemed at first to have discovered a rich mine. To Dodsley the bookseller he writes that he can obtain for him a copy of the MSS. of 'Ælla' from the present possessor for a very small sum; to Horace Walpole, whose 'Anecdotes of Painting' had reached a second edition in 1769, he sends a fragment on 'The Ryse of Peyncteyne in Englande, wroten by T. Rowlie 1469,' which seems at first to have completely taken in the noble dilettante. Walpole, however, was too well deceived, for his interest in Chatterton's account of the Rowley MSS. led him to ask where the poems might be found, as he would be glad to print them. Chatterton's reply seems to have aroused his suspicions, as he put the 'transcripts' in the hands of his friend Gray, whom they did *not* deceive. Chatterton, however, came up to London, and struggled to earn a living by contributing to the magazines and miscellaneous literary work. Finally, with starvation and exposure waiting on him, he poisoned himself in the garret where he lodged.

The most striking thing about Chatterton's work, from a historical point of view, is the deliberate way in which he

seeks to dis sever himself entirely, both in metrical form and in choice of subjects, from the poetry of his age. Of course, this was necessary for the success of his imposition; but apart from that, it is evident that the temper of the poet had little sympathy with the standard of poetry current in the first half of the eighteenth century, and that he exemplifies in a striking way the 'revolt against (eighteenth-century) convention in art and nature' which has so much to do with the re-appearance (or perhaps, rather, the spread) of romanticism in our literature. 'As to the romantic spirit,' says Mr. Theodore Watts, 'it would be difficult to name any one of his successors in whom the high temper of romance has shown so intense a life.¹ And as to the romantic form,' as the same critic points out, 'it is well to remember that the "new principle" which Coleridge enunciates and exemplifies in "Christabel" (1816)—the counting of accents rather than syllable, the mingling of anapæst with iamb—was practised by Chatterton long before.'

The following is a specimen of Chatterton's verse, taken from the minstrels' song in 'Ælla':

- 'When Autumn sad but sun-lit doth appear,
With his gold-hand gilding the falling leaf,
Bringing up Winter to fulfil the year,
Bearing upon his back the ripened sheaf:
When all the hills with woolly seed are white,
When lightning-fires and gleams do meet from far the sight;
- 'When the fair apple, flushed as the even sky,
Doth bend the tree unto the fertile ground;
When juicy pears and berries of black dye
Do dance in air and call the sky around;
Then, foul the eve may be, or be it fair,
Methinks the heart's content is dashed with some dark care.'

A more pretentious and far more worthless forgery than

James Chatterton's harmless imposture is the 'poetry' of
Macpherson Ossian, which James Macpherson declared he had
son: translated from the original Celtic MSS. Macpher-
1788-1796.

¹ 'This influence (the influence of Chatterton on the revival of the romantic temper in the present century) has worked primarily through Coleridge. . . . And when we consider the influence Coleridge himself had upon the English romantic movement generally, and especially upon Shelley and Keats, and the enormous influence these latter have had upon subsequent poets, it seems impossible to refuse to Chatterton the place of the father of the New Romantic School.'

son published his first venture, under the title of 'Fragments of Ancient Poetry,' in 1760, and emboldened by the success it met with, produced further versions of pseudo-Celtic poems in 1762 and the following years. The genuineness of the Macpherson discoveries was questioned at the very outset, Johnson in particular stoutly refusing to believe in them; but many put implicit faith in them, and (especially on the Continent) they were hailed with delight as a wonderful recovery from the stores of the past. The reception accorded to them sufficiently marks at least the longing for some new thing in poetry, and it shows us how the reaction against 'correctness' and frigidity in poetry led to a taste for the bombastic, which blended well enough with the appetite for sentimentality in literature now so rapidly growing. A short specimen of Macpherson's work—it is from 'Croma'—may interest the reader :

'It was the voice of my love ! Few are his visits to the dreams at Malvina ! Open your airy halls, ye fathers of mighty Toscar. Unfold the gates of your clouds, the steps of Malvina's departure are near. I have heard a voice in my dream. I feel the fluttering of my soul. Why didst thou come, O blast from the dark-rolling of the lake ? Thy rustling wing was in the trees, the dream of Malvina departed. But she beheld her love, when his robe of mist flew on the wind ; the beam of the sun was on his skirts, they glittered like the gold of the stranger. It was the voice of my love ! few are his visits to my dreams !

'But thou dwellest in the soul of Malvina, son of mighty Ossian. My sighs arise with the beams of the east ; my tears descend with the drops of night. I was a lovely tree, in thy presence, Oscar, with all my branches round me ; but thy death came like a blast from the desert, and laid my green head low ; the spring returned with its showers, but no leaf of mine arose. The virgins saw me silent in the hall, and they touched the harps of joy. The tear was on the cheek of Malvina : the virgins beheld me in my grief. Why art thou sad, they said, thou first of the maids of Lutha ? Was he lovely as the beam of the morning, and stately in thy sight ?

Beattie's 'Judgment of Paris' appeared in 1765, and was followed six years later by the first book of a poem
 James Beattie: which has made him better known—'The Minstrel.'
 1735-1803. This is written in Spenserian stanzas, a metre over which Beattie exhibits considerable command. Beyond this, however, he can scarcely be said to have succeeded in his avowed attempt 'to imitate Spenser in the measure of his

verse, and in the harmony, simplicity, and variety of his composition.' His poem has certainly one striking characteristic of the 'Fairy Queen': it is almost impossible to keep the thread of the narrative in mind or to comprehend the 'plot' of the work. 'The design was,' says Beattie, 'to trace the progress of a poetical genius, born in a rude age, from the first dawning of fancy and reason till that period at which he may be supposed capable of appearing as a minstrel—that is, as an itinerant poet and musician—a character which, according to the notions of our forefathers, was not only respectable, but sacred.' We select a couple of stanzas for the reader :

'The end and the reward of toil is rest :
 Be all my prayer for virtue and for peace.
 Of wealth and fame, of pomp and power possessed,
 Who ever felt his weight of woe decrease?
 Ah ! what avails the lore of Rome and Greece,
 The lay heaven-prompted and harmonious string,
 The dust of Ophir, or the Tyrian fleece,
 All that art, fortune, enterprise, can bring,
 If envy, scorn, remorse, or pride the bosom wring !

'Let Vanity adorn the marble tomb
 With trophies, rhymes, and scutcheons of renown,
 In the deep dungeon of some Gothic dome,
 Where night and desolation ever frown.
 Mine be the breezy hill that skirts the down ;
 Where a green grassy turf is all I crave,
 With here and there a violet bestrown,
 Fast by a brook, or fountain's murmuring wave ;
 And many an evening sun shine sweetly on my grave.'

A certain amount of influence over succeeding poets is attributed to the 'Minstrel.' 'It exactly reflected,' says Mr. Saintsbury, 'the vague and ill-instructed craving of the age for the dismissal of artificial poetry, and for a return to nature and at the same time to the romantic style.'

In an account of eighteenth-century poetry, our concern with Erasmus Darwin is of the very slightest ; for, Erasmus Darwin : 1731-1802. whatever definition of poetry we may frame to ourselves, or whatever idea of it we may have, it is impossible to make it cover such works as 'The Loves of the Plants' (1789), 'The Botanic Garden' (1791), and other metrical compositions of the same kind. The interest attach-

ing to Darwin's writing is chiefly in connection with the hints of a great scientific theory to be found therein, which has immortalized the name of his grandson. Erasmus Darwin uses Pope's couplet with respectable workmanship, but he has no poetic gifts, and the subjects he chooses are singularly unfitted for treatment in verse. Here are some lines ('Economy of Vegetation') describing man's first knowledge of fire :

'Nymphs ! your soft smiles uncultured man subdued,
And charmed the savage from his native wood ;
You, while amazed his hurrying hordes retire
From the fell havoc of devouring fire,
Taught—the first Art !—with piny rods to raise
By quick attrition the domestic blaze.'

Crabbe was born in the little fishing village of Aldeburgh in Suffolk, his father occupying a humble post in the Customs service. He was apprenticed in his youth to an apothecary, but his taste for literature asserted itself early, and inclined him to abandon his medical career. This he did finally at the age of four-and-twenty, when he came to London and tried to earn a living by literary work. His first poem, 'The Candidate,' appeared in 1780 ; it brought him no profit and not great fame. It is from his acquaintance with Burke soon after this that his success begins. Burke befriended him in every possible way. He helped him with money, he entertained him as his guest, he introduced him to publishers and to influential friends, such as Johnson and Reynolds.

Crabbe's first poems after his friendship with Burke had begun were 'The Library' (1781) and 'The Village' (1783). In 1781 the poet took orders. He then became chaplain to the Duke of Rutland, being subsequently appointed to the rectories of Frome, of West Allington, and of Trowbridge, dying at the last-named in 1832. The only poem of his besides those mentioned above, which belongs to our period, is 'The Newspaper' (1785). His next work, 'The Parish Register,' appeared after an interval of twenty-four years. It was followed by 'The Borough' (1810), 'Tales in Verse' (1812), and 'Tales of the Hall' (1819).

In 'The Village' Crabbe seeks to depict the life of the

rustic poor: not as it had been done in the artificial shepherd and shepherdess pastoral, not as it appears in the rosy tints of Goldsmith's pictures, but in all its reality, sordid, gloomy and stern, as it for the most part is. 'Cast by fortune,' he says,

'On a frowning coast
Which neither groves nor happy valleys boast,
Where other cures than those the Muse relates,
And other shepherds dwell with other mates,
By such examples taught, I paint the cot,
As Truth will paint it, and as bards will not.'

'Crabbe's realism,' says Mr. Leslie Stephen, 'preceding even Cowper, and anticipating Wordsworth, was the first important indication of one characteristic movement in the contemporary school of poetry. His clumsy style and want of sympathy with the new world isolated him as a writer. . . . But the force and fidelity of his descriptions of the scenery of his native place, and of the characteristics of the rural population, give abiding interest to his work. His pathos is genuine and deep, and to some judgments his later works atone for the diminution in tragic interest by their gentleness and simple humanity.'

Cowper's father was rector of a Hertfordshire parish and of good family; his mother, whose memory is pre-
William Cowper served in the poet's pathetic and beautiful 'Lines,' 1781-1800.
 was also of gentle birth. Sent to a private school in Bedfordshire at a very tender age, Cowper seems to have suffered torments at the hands of his companions that increased his natural disposition to be timid and melancholic. At Westminster School, to which he subsequently went, and where Churchill, Colman and Lloyd were among his companions, his aversion to companionship and his state of depression grew upon him. He left school at eighteen, after a good classical education, and was articled to an attorney. In 1754 he was called to the Bar, but never practised. A few years later his uncle secured for him certain well-paid clerkships in the House of Lords, but the difficulties raised in connection with their presentation so affected his nervous temperament that, after an attempt to commit suicide, his mind gave way in 1763. On his recovery he became a member of the Unwin household at

Huntingdon. On Mr. Unwin's death (1767) the family removed to Olney, where Cowper accompanied them. With Newton, the curate of Olney, he composed the little book of 'Olney Hymns' (published 1779). In 1773 Cowper was afflicted again with an attack of insanity. In 1782 appeared his first volume, containing 'The Progress of Error,' 'Table Talk,' 'Conversation,' 'Truth,' 'Expostulation,' 'Hope,' 'Charity.' Cowper had taken up writing verse, as he had taken up gardening and the care of hares, to distract him from his melancholy. It is said that Mrs. Unwin suggested it to him, giving him 'The Progress of Error' for his first subject. A new friend, Lady Austen, set him to write on 'The Task' and 'John Gilpin,' which appeared, together with 'Tirocinium,' in 1785. In 1791 his translation of the 'Iliad' appeared, having occupied him for many years. The closing years of his life were darkened by insanity.

'The Task' is perhaps the most famous of Cowper's works. It is a long poem in blank verse, divided into six books, whose titles are respectively 'The Sofa,' 'The Timepiece,' 'The Garden,' 'The Winter Evening,' 'The Winter Morning Walk,' and 'The Winter Walk at Noon.' A brief analysis of one of these may enable the student to get some insight into the characteristics of Cowper's poetry. 'The Winter Morning Walk' opens thus :

'Tis morning: and the Sun with ruddy orb
 Ascending fires th' horizon ; while the clouds,
 That crowd away before the driving wind,
 More ardent as the disk emerges more,
 Resemble most some city in a blaze,
 Seen through the leafless wood. His slanting ray
 Slides ineffectual down the snowy vale,
 And, tingeing all with his own rosy hue,
 From ev'ry herb and every spiry blade
 Stretches a length of shadow o'er the field.
 Mind, spindling into longitude immense,
 In spite of gravity, and sage remark
 That I myself am but a fleeting shade,
 Provokes me to a smile.'

The poet passes on to describe the objects he meets with in his morning's walk—the cattle mourning in corners, the woodman striding forth, 'leaving unconcerned the cheerful haunts of men,' the poultry strutting up to be fed, the

fantastic effects of snow and ice on the waterfall, and the spray it throws up. This leads him to think of the palace of ice built by the 'imperial mistress of the fur-clad-Russ,' for he seems to let one idea suggest another, and simply to utter them as they come into his mind—

'Great princes have great playthings. Some have played
At hewing mountains into men, and some
At building human wonders mountain-high.
Some have amused the dull, sad years of life
(Life spent in indolence and therefore sad)
With schemes of monumental fame ; and sought
By pyramids and mausolean pomp,
Short-lived themselves, t' immortalize their bones.
Some seek diversion in the tented field,
And make the sorrows of mankind their sport.'

Then he discusses wars and their origin, the growth of monarchy and the evils of it ; he contrasts the loyalty of France and of England ; he breaks out into an eloquent apostrophe to Liberty, and in indignant denunciation of the tyrannic French despotism he thus addresses :

'Her house of bondage, worse than that of old
Which God avenged on Pharaoh—the Bastille,

in words which express a prophetic hope soon to be realized

'Ye horrid towers, the abode of broken hearts,
Ye dungeons and ye cages of despair,
That monarchs have supplied from age to age
With music, such as suits their sov'reign ears,
The sighs and groans of miserable men !
There's not an English heart that would not leap,
To hear that ye were fall'n at last.'

He then goes on, after extolling political and social liberty as one of the chief glories of England, to praise spiritual liberty as the highest good. 'Chains,' he cries—

'Chains are the portion of revolted man,
Stripes and a dungeon ; and his body serves
The triple purpose. In that sickly, foul,
Opprobrious residence he finds them all.
Propense his heart to idols, he is held
In silly dotage on created things,
Careless of their Creator. And that low
And sordid gravitation of his pow'rs
To a vile clod so draws him, with such force
Resistless from the centre he should seek,

That he at last forgets it. All his hopes
Tend downward ; his ambition is to sink,
To reach a depth profounder still, and still
Profounder in the fathomless abyss
Of folly.'

From this state man's only release is in the grace of God, says the poet ; and here he states his creed with a fervid clearness such as had not been given to religion in poetry since Milton's time. The chief new element in Cowper's poetry—the love of nature as a book given by God to man, who understands it fully only by the help of worship and faith—we find expressed in such passages as this :

' Acquaint thyself with God, if thou would'st taste
His works. Admitted once to His embrace
Thou shalt perceive that thou wast blind before :
Thine eye shall be instructed, and thine heart
Made pure shall relish with divine delight,
Till then unfelt, what hands divine have wrought.
Brutes graze the mountain-top, with faces prone,
And eyes intent upon the scanty herb
It yields them.
Man views it and admires, but rests content
With what he views. The landscape has his praise,
But not its author. Unconcerned who formed
The Paradise he sees, he finds it such,
And, such well pleased to find it, asks no more.
Not so the mind that has been touched from Heaven,
And in the school of sacred wisdom taught,
To read His wonders, in whose thought the world,
Fair as it is, existed ere it was,
Not for its own sake merely, but for His
Much more, who fashioned it, he gives it praise.

* * * * *

The soul that sees Him or receives sublimed
New faculties, or learns at least to employ
More worthily the powers she owned before,
Discerns in all things what, with stupid gaze
Of ignorance, till then she overlooked,
A ray of heavenly light, gilding all forms
Terrestrial in the vast and the minute ;
The unambiguous footsteps of the God,
Who gives its lustre to an insect wing,
And wheels His throne upon the rolling worlds.'

'An interesting writer,' says Mr. T. H. Ward,¹ 'has

¹ 'English Poets,' vol. III.

characterized the tendencies of poetry in the latter half of the eighteenth century as "love of natural description and attempts at a more vivid and wider delineation of human character and incident;" two tendencies which, we may add, are but different forms of one—of the revolt against convention both in art and society. The joy in natural objects, of which we have found traces in many writers since Thomson, begins to be linked with a sense of the brotherhood of mankind; to the religious mind—and the wide reach of the religious revival must be remembered—this sense of brotherhood and this sense of natural beauty being sharpened and strengthened by the belief in the near presence of the Creator and Father of all. Cowper is the artist who has expressed, in a new and permanent form, this complex sentiment;—and it is mainly this which makes him of such great interest in the period we are studying. He is not one of our greatest poets, but in him are exemplified so plainly the growth of the fresh elements in poetry, the tendencies of the age which resulted in the French Revolution on the one hand and in the Wordsworthian poetry on the other, that his works are deserving of the most diligent attention from the student of literary history. Moreover, even though he is not placed among the greatest of poets, yet, on occasion, he has given us poetry which would add lustre to the crown of any of our singers. Such are the passionately tender lines 'On the Receipt of my Mother's Picture'; such the lines, written, like all his most poetical work, under the influence of desperate melancholy, which conclude 'The Castaway.' This short poem describes the loss of a poor wretch washed overboard and drowned in the Atlantic; the sad tale is told skilfully enough, but there is nothing on the whole to lift it above the rank of very good commonplace verse, until suddenly in the last stanza the poet breaks away from quiet gloom into passionate despair:

'I therefore purpose not, or dream
Descanting on his fate,
To give the melancholy theme
A more enduring date;
But misery still delights to trace
Its semblance in another's case.

'No voice divine the storm allayed,
 No light propitious shone,
 When, snatched from all effectual aid,
 We perished, each alone :
 But I beneath a rougher sea
 And whelmed in deeper gulfs than he.'

Such utterances of the soul, did we find them often more frequently in Cowper's work, would place him indeed high among our poets ; but it is veritably the cry of a drowning soul, wrung from the death agony—we must not look for it more than once. 'To turn from a poem of Cowper's to a poem of Pope's, or even of Goldsmith's, says the discriminating critic already quoted, 'is to turn from one sphere of art to quite another, from unconscious to conscious art. *Formal gardens in comparison with woodland scenery*, as Southey said ; and how much that means ! It means that the day of critical and so-called classical poetry is over ; that the day of spontaneous, natural, romantic poetry has begun. Burns and Wordsworth are not yet, but they are close at hand.'

Burns was born in a mean cottage near the town of Ayr ; he was the son of a peasant-farmer, the stern, upright man whose memory and household life he has enshrined in 'The Cotter's Saturday Night.' In this poem (written in 1785) Burns depicts 'the toil-worn cotter' and his family, 'the night his weekly toil is at an end.' We see the cheerful, thrifty aspect of the cottage, the loving reunion of the 'elder bairns' who come 'drappin' in' from their work, 'the mother, wi' her needle and her shears' mending her children's clothes and welcoming her young daughter's lover, the father giving sage counsel and religious guidance :

Robert
 Burns :
 1759-1796.

'Perhaps the Christian volume is the theme,
 How guiltless blood for guilty man was shed ;
 How He, who bore in Heaven the second name,
 Had not on earth whereon to lay His head ;
 How His first followers and servants sped ;
 The precepts sage they wrote to many a land :
 How he, who lone in Patmos banished,
 Saw in the sun a mighty angel stand,
 And heard great Babylon's doom pronounced by Heaven's
 command.

'Then kneeling down to Heaven's Eternal King
 The saint, the father, and the husband prays——'

Burns' father removed to a small farm at Mount Oliphant (Ayrshire) when Robert was seven years old, and there remained until 1777, fighting hard against well-nigh overpowering poverty. It was at Mount Oliphant that Burns' earliest poems were written. 'I never had the least thought or inclination of turning poet till I got once heartily in love, and then *rhyme* and *song* were, in a manner, the spontaneous language of my heart.' This he says with reference to his first composition, 'Handsome Nell'—a song which he calls 'very puerile and silly'—written at the age of seventeen. After leaving Mount Oliphant, Burns' father took a farm at Lochlea, in Tarbolton, and here Burns remained till 1783, when he and his brother Gilbert took the little farm of Mossgiel, a short distance from Lochlea, the father's affairs having become desperately involved before his death in 1784. During part of his life at Lochlea love-making of an innocent character seems to have occupied most of the poet's thoughts; some of his best songs belong to this period. The beautiful 'Mary Morison,' for instance, is one of these:

'O Mary, at thy window be,
It is the wished, the trysted hour !
Those smiles and glances let me see,
That make the miser's treasure poor :
How blythely wad I bide the stoure,*
A weary slave frae sun to sun,
Could I the rich reward secure,
The lovely Mary Morison.

'Yestreen, when to the trembling string
The dance gaed thro' the lighted ha',
To thee my fancy took its wing,
I sat, but neither heard nor saw :
Tho' this was fair, and that was braw,
And yon the tcast of a' the town,
I sighed and said amang them a',
"Ye are na Mary Morison."

'Oh Mary, canst thou wreck his peace,
Wha for thy sake wad gladly dee ?
Or canst thou break that heart of his,
Whase only faut is loving thee ?
If love for love thou wilt na gie,
At least be pity to me shown ;
A thought ungentle canna be
The thought o' Mary Morison.'

* Turmoil.

At Mossiel farming prospered little, and the poet was besides involved in difficulties and troubles which came upon him in consequence of his conduct in love matters. He was on the point of leaving Scotland for a clerkship in Jamaica, when the applause which greeted his first volume of poems, published at Kilmarnock in 1786, induced him to alter his plans. It was not only that 'plough-boys and maid-servants would have gladly bestowed the wages they earned most hardly and which they wanted to purchase necessary clothing, if they might procure the works of Burns:' the literary world of the capital was conquered, and Burns entered Edinburgh in 1786 to find himself treated as a man of genius, fit to mix even with 'the best society of the Scottish capital.'

This Kilmarnock volume of 1786—which is practically the same in its contents with the Edinburgh edition of the following year—has Burns' best work in it. Burns' poems are his autobiography: the joys and sorrows into which fortune or passion led him are told by him in a hundred songs. 'Holy Willie's Prayer,' 'The Holy Fair,' etc., express his anger against the religious hypocrisies of the time. In the 'Cotter's Saturday Night' he describes different aspects of the life around him; in 'Tam o' Shanter' he gives us a tale of the adventures of the Ayrshire farmer returning after market and two deep draughts of ale, who sees the witches' revel at Kirk Alloway; and his lyrics record his fleeting sensations of enjoyment and depression.

The Edinburgh edition of the poems brought Burns a fair sum of money, but he failed to get any help from his friends which might enable him to quit his life of wearying toil. In 1788 a small appointment—as gauger—in the Excise was given him, and in that year he married Jean Armour; with her he retired to a farm at Ellisland, in Nithsdale, but his farming did not succeed. In 1791 he moved to Dumfries, and speaks of his life there as 'hurry of business, grinding the faces of the publican and the sinner on the merciless wheels of the Excise, making ballads, and then drinking and singing them.' The work of his last years is not, on the whole, among his best, but it is permeated with the spirit of revolt, which indeed shows in all his works, but becomes more con-

spicuous after the events which culminated in the French Revolution. In the 'Ode for General Washington's Birthday' (written in 1794), his love of freedom is formally and specifically expressed in what is, perhaps, his very worst poem; in another, the year previous, his feelings in the cause of liberty had found expression worthy of his genius in the now universally known 'Scots, wha hae wi' Wallace bled.' Thus the song concludes:

'By Oppression's woes and pains!
By your sons in servile chains!
We will drain our dearest veins,
But they *shall* be free!

'Lay the proud Usurpers low!
Tyrants fall in every foe!
Liberty's in every blow!—
Let us Do—or Die!

And he adds in prose: 'So may God ever defend the cause of Truth and Liberty, as He did that day!¹ Amen.'

The French Revolution was the theme of a long (never completed) rhapsody by William Blake, the artist-poet, for whose work in verse such an important position has of late years been claimed. The main facts of Blake's life are as follows: he was the son of a London tradesman, wrote verse in his childish years, received some artistic training, and became an engraver. He lived an obscure life, supporting himself by his trade, and getting little applause either for his designs or his poems, many of which he published himself, engraving the MS. instead of having it printed. Blake had 'visions,' and insisted that he 'dictated' what he thought his best work at the bidding of spirits who visited him. Yet the most admirable of Blake's poems are to be found among the lyrics in his earliest volumes—'Poetical Sketches' (1783) and 'Songs of Innocence' (1787); a large part of his more ambitious work—notably in 'Urizen' (1794), 'Abania' (1795), and 'Jerusalem' (1804)—seems to be little more than the product of lunacy, and it is difficult to avoid the conviction that Blake was certainly mad at this time. Yet by his best writings—his almost

William
Blake:
1757-1827.

matchless lyrics—which alone need concern us, he stands alone in his age; he is apart from eighteenth-century influence and conventions, and his models—as far as he has any—are the Elizabethans. Beautiful simplicity (where it does not happen to degenerate into childishness) and occasional bursts of melody are his most admirable characteristics; yet the really excellent poetry he has left could be put into an exceedingly small space. For one specimen of it we give 'The Tiger' from the 'Songs of Experience':

'Tiger, tiger, burning bright
In the forests of the night,
What immortal hand or eye
Framed thy fearful symmetry ?
'In what distant deeps or skies
Burned that fire within thine eyes ?
On what wings dared he aspire ?
What the hand dared seize the fire ?
'And what shoulder and what art
Could twist the sinews of thy heart ?
When thy heart began to beat,
What dread hand formed thy dread feet ?
'What the hammer, what the chain,
Knit their strength and forged thy brain ?
What the anvil ? What dread grasp
Dared thy deadly terrors clasp ?
'When the stars threw down their spears,
And watered heaven with their tears,
Did He smile His work to see ?
Did He who made the lamb make thee ?'

Scarce less beautiful are several of the lyrics among his earlier songs; notable are those beginning 'My silks and fine array' and 'Memory, hither come,' with their frank imitation of the Elizabethans.

And now before we quit the poetry of this age, just a word or two may be said about the poets whose main work belongs to the succeeding period, but whose first promises were given before the century closed. Foremost among these is Wordsworth, who, in his 'Lyrical Ballads' (1798), consciously and openly turns from pseudo-poetic diction to what he considers the language of natural expression, fixes his eye on the object, and endeavours to describe it as it is in the ordinary speech of man. In the

The new
poets at the
end of the
eighteenth
century.

same volume appears Coleridge's 'Ancient Mariner,' the first published of his more enduring works ; by that time, too, he had planned and partly wrought 'Christabel.' With Coleridge, one thinks of his brother-in-law, Robert Southey (1774-1843), a far more amiable man, but of little significance as a poet ; his earlier work in verse includes 'Wat Tyler' and 'Joan of Arr,' replete with sympathy for liberty. W. L. Bowles (1762-1850), whom Coleridge admired, published his first volume of 'Sonnets' in 1789. Samuel Rogers, banker, friend of poets, and verse-maker, issued his 'Pleasures of Memory,' an essay in Pope's couplet, in 1793. Greater names are those of Landor and Scott, whose literary activity is just beginning when the period closes.

CHAPTER XXIX.

EIGHTEENTH-CENTURY DRAMA (AFTER 1714).

WE have already referred to the paucity of good dramatic literature during this period. Colley Cibber (1671—
Minor dramatists. 1757), who became laureate on the death of Eusden in 1730, was the last and least of that brilliant band of dramatists who adorned the closing years of the seventeenth century and the opening ones of the eighteenth with their witty examples of the comedy of manners. Cibber's own plays are held in little esteem; among the more notable of those he wrote after Anne's death is 'The Nonjuror'—based on Molière's 'Tartuffe'—which appeared in 1717. Cibber was actor, playwright, manager, and rhymester, but in none of these characters has he such a title to immortality as that which Pope has conferred upon him, by allowing him to ascend the throne of Dulness, *vice* Theobald deposed. Better than anything Cibber wrote was the last of Steele's plays, 'The Conscious Lovers,' which was acted in 1722. This is the play which Fielding—who himself wrote many pieces for the stage—makes Parson Adams speak of as the one play fit for a Christian to witness. Young, the author of 'Night Thoughts,' we have already mentioned as a writer for the stage—we need not linger over his bombastic blank-verse tragedies, 'Busiris,' 'The Revenge,' 'The Brothers'; nor over the poet Thomson's unfortunate 'Sophonisba' (1729). A more famous stage piece than these we have already seen in Gay's 'Beggar's Opera.' If this is a 'Newgate Pastoral,' we have what has been called a 'Newgate Tragedy' in 'The London Merchant; or, George Barnwell,' a prose play acted

in 1730; its author was George Lillo (1693—1739), and the success of his work may remind us that the public, deprived of witty comedies of manner, was not altogether content with the sentimental comedy or the conventional tragic play. Among a number of minor playwrights whose work belongs to the latter half of the century, we may mention Benjamin Hoadley (1706-57), who wrote 'The Suspicious Husband' (1747); Edward Moore (1712-57), the author of 'The Gamester' (1753); David Garrick (1716-79), the actor-manager who wrote and adapted many plays; George Colman (1733-94), who collaborated with him; George Colman the Younger (1762—1836); Samuel Foote (1722-77), whose fertile wit has left us a number of comedies and farces; the Rev. John Home (1724—1808), whose blank-verse tragedy, 'Douglas,' delighted theatre-goers in 1756; Charles Macklin (1690—1797), the author of 'The Man of the World' and 'Love à la Mode'; Hannah Cowley (1749—1809), whose 'The Belle's Stratagem' is still popular; Thomas Holcroft (1745—1809), the author of 'The Road to Ruin'; and Richard Cumberland (1732—1811), who wrote numerous comedies, of which the most successful are 'The West Indian,' and 'The Brothers.' There is a description of Cumberland's method, with a flattering picture of him, drawn by Goldsmith,¹ whose own excellence as a dramatist we have already touched on. A less kindly portrait (or caricature) of him perhaps appears in 'The Critic,' where Sir Fretful Plagiary is said to be meant for Cumberland. 'The Critic' is the last of the comedies of Richard Brinsley Sheridan, who, in his twenty-ninth year was leaving the theatre for political life. He had

Goldsmith.

See p. 462.

R. B.
Sheridan,
1761—1816.

¹ 'Here Cumberland lies, having acted his parts,
The Terence of England, the mender of hearts;
A flattering painter, who made it his care
To draw men as they ought to be, not as they are.
His gallants are all faultless, his women divine,
And Comedy wonders at being so fine:
Like a Tragedy queen he has drenched her out,
Or rather like Tragedy giving a rout.
His fools have their follies so lost in a crowd
Of virtues and feelings, that Folly grows proud;
And coxcombs, alike in their failings alone,
Adopting his portraits, are pleased with their own.'

Retali

made his first hit with 'The Rivals,' which was written in 1774; here Sheridan showed at once that the Restoration Comedy was his model, and that to him (as to Goldsmith, whose 'She Stoops to Conquer' was acted in 1773) the merely sentimental comedy was distasteful. In 'The Rivals' appear some of Sheridan's most famous characters—the cowardly swaggering Bob Acres, fiery Sir Lucius O'Trigger, sentimental Lydia Languish, and most delightful Mrs. Malaprop. 'The School for Scandal' (for which Sheridan has borrowed something from Fielding, as in 'The Rivals' he took a hint from Smollett) was written for Drury Lane Theatre in 1777, when Sheridan had purchased a share in the house, and become manager of it; the play was a great success, as it deserved to be for its witty, polished dialogue and skilful plot. 'The Critic,' a combination of farce and burlesque, was acted towards the end of 1779; its sub-title, 'The Tragedy Rehearsed,' calls attention at once to the fact that it is modelled on the lines of 'The Rehearsal,' the play in which we saw Buckingham ridicule Dryden.¹

¹ The other dramatic works of Sheridan are a farce called 'St. Patrick's Day' (1775); an opera, 'The Duenna' (1775); an adaptation from Vanburgh's 'Relapse' into 'A Trip to Scarborough' (1777); and a tragedy called 'Pizarro' (1789), adapted from Kotzebue.

CHAPTER XXX.

EIGHTEENTH-CENTURY FICTION: FROM DEFOE TO SMOLLETT.

ON the threshold of the eighteenth century we are greeted by him who has justly been called the first of the great English novelists; but it is not alone in that character that we have to deal with him here—we must remember that he is also great as pamphleteer, satirist, and journalist. The details of Defoe's early life are not very exactly known, and there is some doubt as to the date of his birth, which is given variously as 1661, 1662, and 1663. His father, a butcher named Foe (his son first wrote his name as D. Foe, and afterwards D. de Foe, D. Defoe), was a Dissenter, and is said to have intended his son for the Nonconformist ministry; but young Defoe seems to have embarked early in trade (as a hosier and commission-agent), and to have come to grief and been obliged to hide from his creditors (about 1690-92). Before this failure he is said to have taken part in Monmouth's Rebellion, to have been present at Sedgmoor (1685), and to have gone abroad (for safety and for trade) to the Low Countries and to Spain. Certainly his writings show that he was a man of wide experience, and his knowledge of foreign countries seems to show that he had travelled, besides the fact that he boasts (in answer to an opponent who had taunted him with his not being a 'scholar') of his familiarity with foreign tongues. But from these facts no definite conclusions can be arrived at, for certainly, if we reasoned from internal evidence only, it would be impossible to believe that he had not been a full-grown witness of the horrors of the Plague ('Journal

of the Plague,' 1722): while as for his own uncorroborated statements, these are never to be trusted, as he seems to have lied as much from habit and temperament as from any wish to deceive. Anyhow, in 1695 he obtained a post as accountant to the Commissioners of the Glass Duty, given him as a reward for some suggestions for raising war-money, which were embodied in his 'Essay on Projects,' written in 1694-5, but not published till 1698. Many other pamphlets and tracts during the next few years call for little notice, until we come to 'The True-Born Englishman' (1701), a satire in rough decasyllabic verse, written in mockery of the factious outcry against the Dutch in general, and King William in particular. This satire was wonderfully successful, and brought its author under the notice of the king, whose death, however, prevented Defoe reaping any benefit from that circumstance. This is the only metrical composition of Defoe's which we shall have occasion to notice here, except the 'Hymn to the Pillory' (1703), to which he was condemned for his pamphlet, 'The Shortest Way with the Dissenters,' which ironically advocated their utter extirpation as the only way of getting 'settled, uninterrupted union and tranquillity in this nation.' His irony was so successful that it completely took in both foes and friends, the latter of whom clamoured for the prosecution of the author. Defoe accordingly was condemned to the pillory; but when the time for his punishment arrived the Whigs and Nonconformists had been convinced of their mistake, and the culprit became the hero of the mob, who, instead of pelting him with mud and rotten eggs, hung the pillory about with garlands, and applauded the author of the 'Hymn to the Pillory,' which appeared on the day when Defoe was first put in it. After this public triumph, however, Defoe had to go to Newgate, where he remained for a year, during which he projected the 'Review,' publishing it twice a week while in prison (1704) and for some time afterwards until February 1705, when it appeared three times a week till 1713. The rest of Defoe's work till after the accession of the Hanoverian king is journalistic and political. He was an indefatigable writer, and issued pamphlet after pamphlet on most of the questions of the

day, and seems to have been secretly paid by the Tories while apparently supporting Whig principles. It is often difficult to know when he is ironical and when sincere. His political pamphlets (such as 'What if the Pretender should come?' 'Reasons against the Succession of the House of Hanover') were successful in their day, but claim little attention except as specimens of Defoe's simple, unornate, vigorous, realistic style, and his power of grave sarcasm. He is chiefly notable (before 1714) as the prince of powerful journalists and able occasional writers.

After the death of Queen Anne, Defoe managed to secure the confidence of the Whig Ministry, which then came into power. We find him paid by them to get work on an ultra-Tory journal, in order to 'take the sting out of that mischievous paper,' as he boasted he had done in the case of 'Mist's Journal.' Defoe's literary activity was at all times enormous, and after 1714 we find that he was connected with half a dozen journals, and that he wrote pamphlets and books too numerous to mention. We will confine our attention to his famous novels.

From the history of Defoe's life it is easy to see that he had almost as much love for ingenious inventions as he had talent and opportunity for making his fictions pass for reality. 'Defoe was essentially a journalist,' says a biographer; and the main business of his life was to entertain his readers with circumstantial accounts of the events of the day. It was the business of the journalist (of those days) to embellish where detail was lacking, and, if necessary, to invent. It was in this last branch that Defoe was pre-eminently fitted by nature and art to excel. He had a superb power (as was recognised in his own day) 'of forging a story, and imposing it on the world for truth.' This art he practised with immense success in the columns of the journals to which he contributed, and it very well served his purpose after he began to write for the anti-Whig journals of George's reign, to fill their columns with fanciful descriptions of facts or pseudo-facts, to the exclusion, as far as possible, of politics. It is to Defoe that we are indebted

for the 'Letter Introductory,' the precursor of the modern 'leader,' for the invention of something like 'society' journalism, and for some of the first specimens of the 'interviewer's' and 'special correspondent's' art. It is said that in these last two branches fiction is still not altogether unknown; but in Defoe's day, when means of communication were scarce, bad, and costly, an inventive writer had far more scope. Hence it is that 'Defoe always wrote what a large number of people were in a mood to read,' as Professor Minto points out. 'All his writings, with so few exceptions that they may reasonably be supposed to fall within that category, were *pièces des circonstances*. Whenever any distinguished person died or otherwise engaged public attention, no matter how distinguished, whether as a politician, a criminal, or a divine, Defoe lost no time in bringing out a biography. It was in such emergencies that he produced his "Memoirs of Charles XII.," "Peter the Great," . . . "Captain Avery, the King of the Pirates," "Dominique Cartouche," "Rob Roy," "Jonathan Wild," "Jack Shepherd," "Duncan Campbell." . . . We owe the "Journal of the Plague in 1665" [1722] to a visitation which fell upon France in 1721, and caused much apprehension in England. The germ which in his fertile mind grew into "Robinson Crusoe" [1719] fell from the real adventures of Alexander Selkirk, whose solitary residence of four years on the island of Juan Fernandez was a nine days' wonder in the reign of Queen Anne. Defoe was too busy with his politics at that moment to turn it to account; it was recalled to him later on, in the year 1719, when the exploits of famous pirates had given a vivid interest to the chances of adventures in far-away islands on the American and African coasts. "The Life, Adventures, and Piracies of the famous Captain Singleton" [1720], who was set on shore in Madagascar, traversed the continent of Africa from east to west, past the sources of the Nile, and went roving again in the company of the famous Captain Avery, was produced to satisfy the same demand. Such biographies as those of "Moll Flanders" [1715] and "Lady Roxana" [1724] were of a kind . . . that interested all times, and all professions and degrees; but we have seen to what

accident he owed their suggestion, and probably part of their materials.'¹

It is precisely to the fact that Defoe's stories were meant to be passed off as true relations of actual events that they owe one of their most characteristic excellences. Defoe was forbidden by the nature of the case to be *unreal*. He might invent as much as he liked, but he was bound to make his narrative absolutely credible. Professed prose fiction up to his day had been bombastic, telling of impossible adventures and exaggerated passions in inflated and rhetorical language. All this was as much forbidden to Defoe for the success of his work as it seems to have been foreign to his nature. He is the first of our great novelists, because he is the first prose-writer of genius who made his characters live and take part in actions that impress us as real.

To give the reader any idea of the contents of Defoe's chief novels is not very easy; it is fortunately, however, the less necessary, because one which is acknowledged to be among the best—'Robinson Crusoe'—is universally known. Everybody has read the story of the shipwrecked man on his desert island, though the 'Farther Adventures,' with 'The Serious Reflections' are less familiar. 'Captain Singleton' has already been touched on. From 'Colonel Jack' we select our specimen of Defoe's style:—

'I had here now a most happy and comfortable retreat, though it was a kind of an exile; here I enjoyed everything I could think of that was agreeable and pleasant, except only a liberty of going home, which, for that reason perhaps, was the only thing I desired in the world; for the grief of one absent comfort is oftentimes capable of embittering all the other enjoyments in the world.

'Here I enjoyed the moments which I had never before known how to employ; I mean, that here I learned to look upon a long, ill-spent life, blessed with infinite advantage, which I had no heart given me till now to make use of, and here I found just reflections were the utmost felicity of human life.

'Here I wrote these memoirs, having to add to the pleasure of looking back with due reflections, the benefit of a violent fit of the

¹ He had tested the market for such wares in his Journals of Society. . . . The raw materials of several of his elaborate tales, such as 'Moll Flanders' and 'Colonel Jack,' are to be found in the columns of 'Mist's' and 'Applebee's.'—PROFESSOR MISTO.

gout, which, as it is allowed by most people, clears the head, restores the memory, and qualifies us to make the most, and just, and useful remarks upon our own actions.

'Perhaps, when I wrote these things down, I did not foresee that the writings of our own stories would be so much the fashion in England, or so agreeable to others to read, as I find custom and the humour of the times has caused it to be; if any one that reads my story pleases to make the same just reflections, which I acknowledge I ought to have made, he will reap the benefit of my misfortunes, perhaps more than I have done myself. It is evident by the long series of changes and turns which have appeared in the narrow compass of one private, mean person's life, that the history of men's lives may be many ways made useful and instructive to those who read them, if moral and religious improvement and reflections are made by those that write them.'

Of Defoe's power as an artist a few words must be said. He excels in vivid narrative, in which, as we have pointed out, the reader is constantly and unconsciously impressed with the reality of the story, as much by the obvious truth of the details as by the ingenuous, unornate way in which the characters make their statements. Defoe's language is simple, clear, and direct; he is never rhetorical or declamatory; he is always circumstantial and terse. Description as an ornament he does not indulge in; but of the kind of description that is necessary for the purpose of making the reader understand his characters' situations he is a master. He does not deal with complex or subtle emotions, or with involved and complicated occurrences; simplicity is the characteristic of his episodes, his personages, and his style. For his irony and powers of humorous controversy we must look in his pamphlets. The grossness of which he is sometimes accused is not worse than that of most other writers of the day. He often describes coarse incidents, and he uses appropriate language; but he does not seem to go out of his way to introduce unnecessary dirtiness. In each of his novels the 'moral' is sound; vice is made to bring its own punishment to the vicious. This is often exhibited in a rough, coarse kind of way; but refinement of feeling is the last thing to be found in Defoe's books, and that is perhaps why he is often characterised as 'prosaic.' Certainly he was a victorious adventurer in a new region of prose.

It is only as a matter of convenience we group the great Jonathan Swift, English master of irony in the chapter which
1667—1745. deals with fiction; there is, however, this much justification for so doing, that the best known and, all things considered, the greatest of his works is a work of imagination in prose. The larger part of his writings however is 'occasional'; for like Defoe he was a busy journalist and political pamphleteer.

Swift was born of English parents in Dublin, after the death of his father, which event had left his mother in poverty. By the help of his uncles he was educated at Kilkenny and Dublin University, where he took no honours, receiving his degree by 'special grace' (*i.e.*, by act of condescension on the part of the University). In 1786 Swift came to England, and was received as a sort of literary companion and secretary into the house of Sir William Temple, where he met Hester Johnson (Stella), then a child under Temple's guardianship. It was here that Swift seems first to have been attacked by that strange disorder which he himself in after-life was wont to declare was brought on by eating too much unripe fruit. Here, too, King William, when on a visit to Temple, is said to have offered to give him a commission in the army. Swift left Temple to take orders, but returned again to him, and stayed in his household till Temple's death (1699), and subsequently edited his 'Remains.' In 1700 he received a small Irish living (Laracor), where he went to reside, and was soon followed by Hester Johnson and her friend Miss Dingley. After many occasional visits to London, he was intrusted by the Irish Bishops with a commission to the Court of Queen Anne, and it was then (1710) he commenced the 'Journal to Stella,' which ends in 1713 with his return to Ireland as Dean of St. Patrick's. We shall see that his first political writings were on the Whig side. We may note here that his connection with the other party dates from his mission to England.

One of Swift's earliest writings is connected with his patron, Sir William Temple. This arose out of the 'Epistles of Phalaris' controversy, and was entitled 'The Battle of the Books.' In this 'skit,' written about 1697 (and

published 1704), Swift naturally espoused the cause of Temple and the Ancients against Bentley and the Moderns. About the same time, too (or possibly somewhat earlier), he wrote 'The Tale of a Tub,' which, however, did not appear till some years later, and was never published with its author's name during his lifetime. This satire, 'written for the universal improvement of mankind,' deals with the doings of three sons, Peter (Roman Catholicism), Martin (Church of England), and Jack (Dissent), and the way in which they carry out their father's will. Swift's intention was doubtless to champion the Church of England; but the irreverent way in which he handles things supposed to be sacred is said to have retarded, and in some ways altogether stopped, his preferment.

The first of Swift's writings to be published was a political tract, written in the Whig interest, in the year 1701, entitled 'A Discourse of the Contests and Dissensions between the Nobles and Commons in Athens and Rome.' Swift's next writings belong to the year 1708, when he wrote 'The Sentiments of a Church of England Man in respect to Religion and Government' (one of his few productions which are neither ironical nor bitterly partisan), and 'An Argument against the Abolition of Christianity,' in which he treats with the utmost mock-seriousness of the inconveniences that would arise from such a course. This was followed next year by 'A Project for the Advancement of Religion,' purporting to be by a 'person of quality,' in which Swift's scorn of the world (as he shows it us even more plainly later on in 'Gulliver') is more conspicuous than his desire to amend it. Satire of lighter kind distinguishes 'The Predictions for the Year 1708,' where Swift, under the name of 'Isaac Bickerstaff,' gravely prophesies the events of the year to come. His mockery is directed against the 'Astrologic Almanac' makers in general, and one Partridge in particular, who was destined (according to Bickerstaff) to die on March 29th, 1708. Accordingly, after that day, Swift promptly published 'An Account of the Death of the unfortunate Partridge,' who protested in vain that he was alive, only to have it gravely demonstrated to him in 'A Vindication of Isaac

Bickerstaff' (1709), that there was certainly every reason for his non-existence.

From his mission to London (1710-13) dates Swift's friendship with Harley and Bolingbroke, and his appearance as the literary champion of the Tories. To the same period belongs his 'Journal to Stella,' which latter is a series of letters to Hester Johnson (never meant to be published; of course), in which the writer describes the events of his daily life, little and big; the statesmen and men of letters of the day; his mode of existence, his expectations and doings. Among the latter was the re-establishment of the *Examiner*¹ as a semi-official Tory organ, and the writing of a large amount of political pamphlets. Two of these, 'The Conduct of the Allies' (1711), with its sequel, 'Reflections on the Barrier Treaty' (1712), and 'The Public Spirit of the Whigs'² (1714), created a sensation on their appearance. 'The purpose' (of the 'Conduct') 'was,' says Johnson, 'to persuade the nation to peace; and never had any writer more success. The people, who had been amused with bonfires and triumphal processions, and looked with idolatry on the General and his friends—who, as they thought, had made England the arbitress of nations—were confounded between shame and rage when they found that "armies had been exhausted and millions destroyed" to secure the Dutch or aggrandise the Emperor, without any advantage to ourselves; that we had been bribing our neighbours to fight their own quarrel; and that among our enemies we might number our allies.' The success of this pamphlet was tremendous; and 'Swift now attained the zenith of his political importance,' which was not weakened by the fact that his reply to Steele's 'Crisis' (for which latter, Steele was expelled the House of Commons by the Tory majority) so irritated the Lords 'that some of them,' says Johnson, 'demanded an audience of the Queen, and solicited reparation. A proclamation was issued, in which three hundred pounds were offered for the discovery of the author. From this storm he was,' as he relates, "'secured by a sleight," of what kind is not known,' though doubtless it

¹ November, 1710. Addison's *Whig Examiner* had come to an end a month before.

² In answer to Steele's pamphlet, 'The Crisis.'

was owing to the protection of his powerful friends in the Ministry, for though the pamphlet was anonymous (like most of Swift's writings), the author was well known.¹ In the year of this 'storm,' however, Queen Anne died, the Tories were utterly routed, and Swift retired to his deanery (of St. Patrick's, Dublin), which had been conferred on him in 1713. We may here observe that, though his better-known works ('The Drapier Letters' and 'Gulliver') belong to a later date, all the characteristics of his genius—his lucid, clear style, his occasional outbursts of eloquence, his savage contempt of shams (and almost of all mankind as the embodiment of them), his grave irony, his bitter satire, his originality, and his admirable power of stating his arguments and combating his adversaries—are as clearly shown in his writings before 1714 (*e.g.*, 'The Battle of the Books,' 'The Tale of a Tub'—in some respects the best written of all his works—'The Arguments against the Abolition of Christianity,' 'The Conduct of the Allies,' etc.) as in those after it; while his horrible manner of dealing with horrible subjects, and his diseased liking for treating of obscene things, had not as yet found vent—at least, in print.

In Ireland Swift spent most of his remaining years after 1714, visiting England occasionally and keeping up his friendship with Pope, Bolingbroke, Arbuthnot, etc. He was married privately in 1716 to Hester Johnson, the 'Stella' to whom his journal was written. The ill-fated Esther Vanhomrigh (the 'Vanessa' of his poem 'Cadenus and Vanessa') died after following him to Ireland in 1723—of a broken heart, it is said. He himself gradually lost his reason towards the close of his life. Besides some verses, not of any great value, his chief works after his return to Ireland are the 'Drapier's Letters' and 'Gulliver's Travels' (1726-27).

The former of these were written in 1724, under the name of 'M. B. Drapier,' to rouse the indignation of Ireland on the grant of a patent for coining halfpence granted to an Englishman named Wood. These halfpence were not in reality the debased coins Swift declared them to be, but Swift was able to provoke such indignation as to cause the

¹ The printer was summoned before the House of Lords, and committed to prison.

patent to be withdrawn. The 'Draper's Letters' raised him to the height of the popular esteem and affection. He was honoured by the populace as the champion, patron, and instructor of Ireland; and gained such power as, considered both in its extent and duration, scarcely any man has ever enjoyed without greater wealth or higher station.

'Gulliver's Travels,' the most famous of Swift's writings, is, like Defoe's 'Robinson Crusoe,' a record of imaginary lands; but, unlike that book, deals with miraculous peoples, and is a satire.

The plan of 'Gulliver' is as follows: Mr. Lemuel Gulliver, a ship's surgeon, 'set sail from Bristol, May 4th, 1699,' for the East Indies; the ship was wrecked 'in the latitude of 30 degrees 2 minutes south,' but Gulliver was cast up by the sea on an unknown shore. This was the kingdom of Lilliput, whose little inhabitants take Gulliver captive. Swift describes the life of these tiny people—their quarrels with their neighbours of Blefuscu, the court life, their factions, and so forth. The manner of his satire may be gathered from the following ironical description of the causes for the 'obstinate war' between 'the great empires' Blefuscu (France) and Lilliput (England):

'It began upon the following fashion. It is allowed on all hands that the primitive way of breaking eggs before we eat them was upon the larger end; but his present majesty's grandfather, while he was a boy, going to eat an egg, and breaking it according to the ancient practice, happened to cut one of his fingers, whereupon the emperor, his father, published an edict, commanding all his subjects, upon great penalties, to break the smaller end of their eggs. The people so highly resented this law that our histories tell us there have been six rebellions raised on that account; wherein one emperor lost his life and another his crown. These civil commotions were constantly fomented by the monarchs of Blefuscu; and when they were quelled, the exiles always fled for refuge to that empire. It is computed that eleven thousand persons have at several times suffered death rather than submit to break their eggs at the smaller end. Many hundred large volumes have been published upon this controversy; but the books of the Big-endians have been long forbidden, and the whole party rendered incapable by law of holding employments. During the course of these troubles the emperors of Blefuscu did frequently expostulate by their ambassadors, accusing us of making a schism in religion by offending against a fundamental doctrine of our great prophet Lustrog, in the fifty-fourth chapter of the Blundecral (which is their Alcoran). This, however, is thought to be a mere strain upon the text; for the words

are these : That all believers shall break their eggs at the convenient end ; and which is the convenient end seems, in my humble opinion, to be left to every man's conscience, or at least in the power of the chief magistrate to determine.'

The second section of the book is written in the same vein, but now Lemuel, having escaped from Lilliput, is stranded in Brobdingnag, a country whose inhabitants were as much above him as the Lilliputians were below him. Gulliver, when questioned about his native land, describes it in the most glowing terms, but in cross-examination is compelled, much against his will, to expose to the giant king the defects Swift saw in the civilized governments of his time. 'It doth not appear, from all you have said,' remarks his majesty,

'how any one virtue is required towards the procurement of any one station among you ; much less that men were ennobled on account of their virtue ; that priests were advanced for their piety or learning ; soldiers for their conduct or valour ; judges for their integrity ; senators for the love of their country ; or councillors for their wisdom. As for yourself,' continued the king, 'who have spent the greatest part of your life in travelling, I am well disposed to hope you may hitherto have escaped many vices of your country. But by what I have gathered from your own relation, and the answers I have with much pains wringed and extorted from you, I cannot but conclude the bulk of your natives to be the most pernicious race of little odious vermin that nature ever suffered to crawl upon the surface of the earth.'

These words seem to contain Swift's candid opinion of his fellow-men, but it does not find its fullest (and foulest) expression till the last part of the work : in Lilliput and in Brobdingnag, and in Laputa,¹ which he next visits, his text is rather Puck's 'Lord, what *fools* these mortals be !' They are horrible and obscene creatures of night in the fourth part, which describes the country of the Houyhnhnms. These unpronounceable beings are a noble equine race who do well to regard with loathing and treat with ignominy the degraded Yahoos, under which name Swift presents to us his horrible ideas of mankind.

It is said that the madness which fell upon Swift's last

¹ In this part of the book the most amusing portion deals with Gulliver's visit to the academy of philosophers in the flying island : it is there that he sees one 'projector' endeavouring to extract sunbeams from cucumbers, another trying to calcine ice into gunpowder, a third contriving a plan for building houses from the roof downwards. In this book, too, he describes the unhappy Struldbrugs.

years was already at work upon his mind when he wrote this blackest part of his work, and it is pointed out that it may have been written during Stella's last illness, about which time his biographer says the giddiness from which he had before suffered became chronic. But however this may be, it is impossible to avoid seeing that Swift had a genuine hatred and scorn of the human race, which—with the exception of a very few personal friends—he seems to have regarded as a collection of interesting but noisome objects; nor can we forget that he evidently had a liking—a diseased liking it may well be—for the disgusting, which made him well inclined to deal with the objects of his scorn in a revolting way. His unrivalled power of irony, his lucid method of description, and his passionate loathing of his kind, combined to produce a work which, as a satire on man, has never been approached in our literature. He says himself that he

‘Had too much satire in his vein,
And seemed determined not to starve it,
Because no age could more deserve it.
Yet malice never was his aim;
He lashed the vice, but spared the name.’¹

It is true that he did not, like his friend Pope, single out particular foes for attack: his enemy is the whole race; the vice of being human was the one which he lashed.

A very different temperament was that of a young man who about this time was eking out his allowance by writing plays for the theatres. Henry Fielding, 1707-1754, whose first play, ‘Love in Several Masques,’ was acted in 1728, was of a healthy, vigorous temperament, with a keen love of enjoyment, a fine sense of humour and a deep and broad sympathy with—and understanding of—that poor human nature which seemed to Swift nothing but corruption. Fielding was of good family, and had been well educated at Eton and at Leyden. He came to London at the age of twenty, and at once ‘turned author’; during the next twelve years he wrote a large number of plays, appeared for awhile as a player himself, and contributed to periodicals.

¹ In some verses which he wrote ‘On the Death of Dr. Swift’: see p. 412.

His first notable work was published in 1742: this was 'Joseph Andrews.' In 1748 Fielding was made a stipendiary magistrate. Next year appeared his greatest novel—perhaps the greatest that has ever been written—'Tom Jones.' Then came (in 1751) 'Amelia.' In this last he has drawn the character of his heroine from his first wife, whom he married in 1735, and who had died in 1743. Fielding's last work was his 'Voyage to Lisbon': he had gone abroad in 1754 on a vain endeavour to stave off his approaching death.

In 1740 Richardson's 'Pamela' had been published; as it was to this that the 'Adventures of Joseph Andrews' owe their origin, we will give some account of it here. Richardson's 'Pamela' is a country girl, who withstands the temptations of her young and wealthy master, 'Mr. B.,' and has her reward—the sub-title of the book is 'Virtue Rewarded'—after many trials and tribulations, in marriage with her persecutor. The vulgar *dénouement* which united the immaculate heroine with the blackguardly gentleman, and the satisfaction with which this 'reward' is received by Pamela Andrews herself, as well as by her parents, undoubtedly jarred on Fielding's more delicate notions as much as the manner of writing seems to have amused him. Accordingly he produced a brother to Pamela, one Joseph, who is a footman to a lady. She becomes enamoured of him, and persecutes him with her attentions. Joseph, however, is not to be beguiled by them, and it is in a spirit of frank burlesque of 'Pamela' and 'Mr. B.' that the beginning of the book is written. This is not the tone of the whole, however: Fielding becomes interested in his characters, and the caricature is soon dropped. The novel is humorous throughout, it is true, but the characters are vividly real: famous among these is the good Parson Adams, the companion and friend of Joseph.

The quality of humour so conspicuous in 'Joseph Andrews' shines through all the pages of the greater successor 'Tom Jones'; but it is the construction of the novel which has excited more particularly the admiration of the critics. The plot is briefly as follows: Squire Allworthy (whose name describes his character) brings up, as if they were his sons, the child of his sister Bridget, who had married

a Captain Blifil, and the foundling Tom Jones. The education of the two boys, under Parson Thwackum and Philosopher Square, the life of the good Squire, his sour sister and his barbarian neighbour, Squire Western, are described by the hand of an artist who, as a delineator of men and manners, has never been surpassed. The two boys are of diametrically opposite characters—Blifil, hypocritical, ungenerous and wary; Tom, warm-hearted, quick-tempered and unsuspecting. He falls into many errors, but we are meant to see that they are such as a hot-blooded youth, in fine health and in the first enjoyment of life, might easily commit; his nature is not depraved, and although he sins, he is always ready to repent, and to atone as far as he can. Through Blifil's well-laid plots and Tom's own folly, the latter is disowned by Squire Allworthy; but in the end, after many adventures—in which in one instance at least it is impossible to avoid regarding Tom as one of the meanest of rascals—Blifil is exposed, and Tom is triumphant, receiving the hand of the charming Sophia Western, the heroine, from whose affections Blifil had in vain tried to oust him. No doubt Tom as little deserves the pure and affectionate Sophia as Mr. B. does Pamela—or for that matter Pamela does Mr. B.—but the reader loves Fielding's hero, and sympathizes more with him than with Richardson's creations, and is consequently not shocked in the one case as the other.

Fielding, in the introduction to 'Tom Jones'—the dedication to Lord Lyttelton, his kind friend—thus sets forth the aim of this book of his, 'the labours of some years':

'... I declare that to recommend goodness and innocence hath been my sincere endeavour in this history. This honest purpose you have been pleased to think I have attained; and, to say the truth, it is likeliest to be attained in books of this kind; for an example is a kind of picture, in which Virtue becomes as it were an object of sight, and strikes us with an idea of that loveliness which Pluto asserts there is in her naked charms.

'Besides displaying that beauty of Virtue which may attract the admiration of mankind, I have attempted to engage a stronger motive to human action in her favour, by convincing men that their true interest directs them to a pursuit of her. For this purpose I have shown that no acquisitions of guilt can compensate the loss of that solid inward comfort of mind which is the sure companion of innocence and virtue; nor can in the least balance the evil of that horror and anxiety

which, in their room, guilt introduces into our bosoms. And again, that as these acquisitions are in themselves generally worthless, so are the means to obtain them not only base and infamous, but at best incertain, and always full of danger. Lastly, I have endeavoured strongly to inculcate that virtue and innocence can scarce ever be injured but by indiscretion; and that it is this alone which often betrays them into the snares that deceit and villainy spread for them. A moral which I have the more industriously laboured, as the teaching it is, of all others, likeliest to be attended with success; since I believe it is much easier to make good men wise than to make bad men good.

'For these purposes I have employed all the wit and humour of which I am master in the following history; wherein I have endeavoured to laugh mankind out of their favourite follies and vices.'

'As a picture of manners,' says one of the greatest of nineteenth-century novelists, who himself learned much from Fielding, 'the novel of "Tom Jones" is indeed exquisite; as a work of construction quite a wonder: the by-play of wisdom, the power of observation, the multiplied felicitous terms and thoughts, the varied character of the great Comic Epic keep the reader in a perpetual admiration and curiosity. . . . What a wonderful art!' continues Thackeray, 'what an admirable gift of nature was it with which the author of these tales was endowed, and which enabled him to fix our interest, to waken our sympathy, to seize upon our credulity, so that we believe in his people—speculate gravely upon their faults or their excellences, prefer this one or that, deplore Jones's fondness for drink and play, Booth's¹ fondness for play and drink, and the unfortunate position of the wives of both gentlemen—love and admire those ladies with all our hearts, and talk about them as faithfully as if we had breakfasted with them this afternoon in their actual drawing-rooms, or should meet them this afternoon in the Park! What a genius! what a vigour! what a bright-eyed intelligence and observation! what a wholesome hatred for meanness and knavery! what a vast sympathy! what a cheerfulness! what a manly relish of life! what a love of human kind! what a poet is here!—watching, meditating, brooding, creating! What multitudes of truths has that man left behind him! What generations he has taught to laugh wisely and fairly! What scholars he has formed and accustomed to the exercise

¹ Under which name Fielding has drawn his own portrait in 'Amelia,' the heroine of the novel being his first wife.

of thoughtful humour and the manly play of wit! What a courage he had! what a dauntless and constant cheerfulness of intellect, that burned bright and steady through all the storms of his life, and never deserted its last wreck! It is wonderful to think of the pains and misery which the man suffered; the pressure of want, illness, remorse which he endured; and that the writer was neither malignant nor melancholy, his view of truth never warped, and his generous human kindness never surrendered.'

Richardson's first novel gave rise to his great contemporary's first effort in the same direction; but while the career in literature of the author of 'Pamela' practically began with that book, the other (although a much younger man) had long been, as we have seen, writing for his living. While Fielding was producing farces and squibs, 'having no choice,' as he said himself, 'but to be a hackney writer or a hackney coachman,' Richardson was pursuing the less exciting, but more profitable, avocation of a printer. He was over fifty when his first novel appeared, and its composition was not due to any wish, in the first place, to shine in literature. Richardson from his boyhood—he was the son of a Derbyshire carpenter—loved writing letters, and he tells us that in his early years, the village girls used to get him to write letters to their sweet-hearts for them; it is probably partly to this that he owes the intimate acquaintance with the female heart that his books display. It is evident that he was always a close observer of the relations between the sexes—practically the only subject his books deal with—and that he loved to analyze the emotions connected with tenderness and passion, and to moralize about them. To preach, indeed, he seems to have considered his main duty in literature, and thus arose 'Pamela,' for having undertaken to write a sort of 'Polite Letter-writer,' as it is called nowadays, a series of model epistles, as a guide to uneducated persons in their correspondence, devised with the double plan of teaching what they ought to say and how they ought to say it, he was struck by the fact that a story of real life and its temptations, told in a series of letters, might be both instructive and entertaining to young girls going out to service, and to other young people. It is

interesting to consider that Richardson's first novel was meant for the instruction of a class a good deal more illiterate than that which now reads the *Family Herald*. His contempt, indeed, for the idea of merely writing a book to entertain is clearly expressed in a letter he writes to one of his numerous lady admirers, to whom he sends the last volumes of 'Clarissa': he trusts that they may be allowed a place among her favourite works of devotion, for 'they appear in the humble guise of novel,' he says, 'only by way of accommodation to the manners and taste of an age overwhelmed with luxury, and abandoned to sound and soundlessness.'

Some account of 'Pamela' we have already given in discussing Fielding's 'Joseph Andrews.' 'Clarissa,' the work which entitles Richardson to a place among our classics—perhaps among the world's classics—was finished in 1748. The 'plot' is simplicity itself; the heroine, Clarissa Harlowe, persecuted by her family because she refuses to marry an odious suitor, is driven, or rather tricked, into accepting the protection of her assiduous wooer, Lovelace: he, after many vain attempts to induce her to consent to his wishes, at last, after submitting her to many indignities, causes her to be 'first robbed of her senses and then of her honour.' Clarissa dies, after refusing to marry the now remorseful villain who has so basely used her, and Lovelace himself is killed in a duel by his victim's cousin. The book is immensely big, the story is narrated in stupendously long letters between the chief characters, and Richardson has no title to rank as a stylist. Yet that it entitles him to be ranked as a great genius there cannot be a doubt; the interest one takes in the characters begins with their introduction, and grows upon one as one reads; we can quite understand the feelings that urged Richardson's feminine friends to beg him to give it a happy ending: for we get so to know and love the sweet, sprightly, intensely feminine Clarissa that we feel for her sufferings as if they were actually going on. Richardson is not often ranked high as a humorist, but the delightful half-conscious malice Clarissa displays towards her sister Bella, the way in which she acts towards and speaks of Solmes, the detestable husband chosen for her, and the character of Miss Anna Howe, her confidante, show him to have had a keen

sense of humour. Towards the conclusion of 'Clarissa' he has reached a conception of the sublime which certainly the reader of 'Pamela' would not have suspected in him. His fair readers were angry with him, however, and he has to justify himself for making them weep so bitterly.¹ To let Lovelace marry Clarissa, after his reform, would be an encouragement to the rake to 'pass the flower and prime of his youth in forming and pursuing the most insidious enterprises,' till at last he meets a Clarissa, with whom all his arts avail him nothing, and to whom he at last 'graciously extends his hand.' As for Clarissa's position, we have but to look at the letter she left to be given to Lovelace after her death. Here are two paragraphs from it :

'I repeat, therefore, that I do forgive you ; and may the Almighty forgive you too ! Nor have I, at the writing of this, any other essential regrets than what are occasioned by the grief I have given to parents, who till I knew you were the most indulgent of parents ; by the scandal given to other branches of my family ; by the disreputation brought upon my sex ; and by the offence given to virtue in my fall.

'As to myself, you have only robbed me of what once were my favourite expectations in the transient life I shall have quitted when you receive this. You have only been the cause that I have been cut off in the bloom of youth, and of curtailing a life that might have been agreeable to myself, or otherwise, as had suited the designs and ends of Providence. I have reason to be thankful for being taken away from the evil of supporting my part of a yoke with a man so unhappy ; I will only say that in all probability every hour I had lived with him might have brought with it some new trouble. And I am (indeed through sharp afflictions and distresses) indebted to you secondarily, as I humbly presume to hope, for so many years of glory as might have proved years of danger, temptation, and anguish, had they been added to my mortal life.'

The third and last of Richardson's novels is 'Sir Charles Grandison' (1754); in this book the hero, who gives his name to the novel, is a terribly faultless person, who is intended to represent the ideal of perfect manhood; the heroine—or rather one of the heroines—the insipid but estimable Harriet Byron, is rewarded with his hand. This is certainly the least successful of Richardson's novels.

Some sort of comparison or contrast between Richardson and his great contemporary novelist, who ridiculed him and

¹ Over Lovelace, rather than Clarissa, apparently.

whom he heartily disliked, is almost inevitable. In their own day, to appreciate one was to depreciate the other, and something of the same spirit has lasted. Richardson, as we saw, set up a purpose strongly before him in each of his works, and Fielding was one of those authors of whose books he deprecates the immoral effect; yet, curiously enough, it is the author of 'Clarissa' whose books are generally allowed to have a more harmful tendency than the author of 'Tom Jones': as Coleridge says, 'There is a cheerful, sunshiny, breezy spirit that prevails everywhere [in Fielding], strongly contrasted with the close, hot, day-dreamy continuity of Richardson.' As far as regards the matter of their compositions, each of them seems little indebted to any predecessor: both drew on their experience, observation, and imagination. In Richardson we have none of that fine constructive art that his rival exhibits; nor, as we have said, can he, as a mere writer, for a moment be compared to Fielding. Yet Richardson's elaborate piece-by-piece method, his calm page-long description of trivial detail, his simple devices of inserting letter within letter to make us thoroughly *au courant* with the story, all unite to produce a result utterly beyond praise. He must certainly be called a great artist, for he deliberately aims at getting certain effects, and does get them; yet the methods he uses are such as no artist before or since has ever succeeded with. If you read a page of Fielding, you are impressed by the fact that the author is a scholar and a gentleman, a true artist and a man of vigorous, generous mind; if you read only so much of Richardson, you will probably think that he is a slipshod writer and a dull one; yet the chances are you will still want to go on reading him.

In 1748, the same year as Richardson's 'Clarissa' and the year before Fielding's 'Tom Jones,' appeared Tobias Smollett's 'Roderick Random.' A much younger man than his two greater fellow-novelists, Smollett turned to novel-writing just when the public was beginning to eagerly read that kind of composition. Smollett was born in Dumbartonshire (1721) and, after being educated at Glasgow, was apprenticed to a doctor there; at the age of nineteen he came to London with a tragedy—'The Regicide'—in his pocket, and very little else. Unable to get his play

acted, or to support himself by writing, he took a place as ship's surgeon. He was at sea for six or seven years; witnessed the siege of Carthage (1741), which he afterwards described in 'Roderick Random,' and got that acquaintance with seafaring men and their ways which he displays there and in 'Peregrine Pickle.' Leaving the sea, he reached England in 1746, and wrote 'The Tears of Scotland' (a poem on the cruel treatment of the Highlanders after the '45). He also tried his hand at an opera, a satire or two, and other literary manufacture. In 1747 he married, and, being both poor and extravagant, was forced to take to writing as a trade. Next year his 'Roderick Random' was published. 'It brought him in,' says his biographer, 'both fame and emolument.' 'Peregrine Pickle' followed in 1751; then, after an interval in which he endeavoured to practise as a doctor in London, came 'The Adventures of Ferdinand, Count Fathom' (1753). His last and pleasantest novel was 'Humphry Clinker,' written at Leghorn, where he died in 1771, the year of its publication. In the interval between the last two he was engaged on a variety of miscellaneous literary work, translating 'Don Quixote,' compiling a 'Compendium of Voyages,' histories of England, France, Italy, etc., contributing to the journals—he was imprisoned for three months and fined for a libel in the *Critical Review*, during which time he wrote the 'Adventures of Sir Lancelot Greaves'—editing a weekly paper.¹ Among his verse, his 'Ode to Independence' is his best performance.

'Roderick Random' (like Smollett's other novels) is to a large extent autobiographical. 'He did not invent much, as I fancy,' says Thackeray, 'but had the keenest perceptive faculty, and described what he saw with wonderful relish and delightful broad humour.' Perhaps the humour may seem to many a good deal more broad than delightful. Smollett is one of the coarsest of writers, and so much of his humour is in connection with brutal or revolting practical jokes, that it is apt to be more disgusting than amusing. In 'Roderick Random' the 'hero' is sent on a series of ad-

¹ *The Briton*, in support of Lord Bute, in opposition to which Wilkes' *North Briton* was started.

ventures resembling the author's way through the world; he is a Scotch lad who, ill-used by his relatives and barbarously treated by his tutor, is aided to some extent by his good old sailor uncle, Bowling. Roderick gets some university education, picks up a knowledge of physics, and sets out on his way through the world with his school-fellow and humble admirer, Strap. The book is taken up with records of adventures of all kinds, in which, as a rule, Roderick is the central figure.

'Humphry Clinker' is a book of a much humaner kind. The story is told in a series of letters¹ written on a tour through Scotland and England by the various characters; the chief of these are Matthew Bramble, a kind-hearted old fellow travelling for his health, his niece, Lydia Melford, and her brother, his sour sister Tabitha, Humphry Clinker and Winifred Jenkins, the maid, whose religious feelings and spelling are equally admirable. Humphry is a postilion who is taken into Bramble's service; he is a pious follower of the teachings of the Wesleys, and is the means of converting Winifred, whom he finally marries; he turns out to be the son of old Bramble.

¹ Richardson, as we have seen, had told all his stories in the epistolary form. But 'the very ingenious scheme of describing the various effects produced upon different members of the same family by the same objects had been employed,' says Scott, 'by Anstey, the facetious author of "The New Bath Guide" . . . six or seven years before "Humphry Clinker" appeared. But Anstey's diverting satire was but a slight sketch compared with the finished and elaborate manner in which Smollett has in the first place identified his characters, and then filled them with language, sentiments, and powers of observation, in exact correspondence with their talents, temper, condition and disposition.'—The 'New Bath Guide,' by Christopher Anstey (1724-1805), was a set of letters in verse (1766).

CHAPTER XXXI.

EIGHTEENTH-CENTURY FICTION: STERNE—GOLDSMITH— MINOR NOVELISTS.

STERNE had reached middle age at the time when the first two volumes of 'Tristram Shandy' appeared in 1759. The son of a moneyless ensign, he was adopted by a prosperous uncle, who had him educated, sending him to Cambridge at the age of nineteen. He took orders in 1736, and was two years afterwards given a small living in Yorkshire. His marriage in 1743 brought him further preferment, and he was in fairly comfortable circumstances when he published his first work at York. The success with which it met induced him to come to London, to republish his book there, and to receive the applause of the fashionable world. 'Tristram Shandy' grew to nine volumes before it was completed—or, rather, left off—in 1767, while the 'Sermons of Yorick' had sprung out of it in 1760. In 1765 Sterne visited France for the last time, and journeyed on to Rome, the result of this being the famous 'Sentimental Journey,' which appeared in 1768, three weeks before its writer's death.

To attempt to describe the 'plot' of 'Tristram Shandy' would be impossible, for one of the most striking features of the work is its entire lack of anything like plan or arrangement. The book nominally deals with the 'life and opinions of Tristram Shandy,' but it is made up of ludicrous incidents, of grotesque digressions and moralisings, and of anything else that affords room for Sterne's humour and sentimentality. Apart from his gifts as a humorist (often exercised in Rabelais fashion *plus* a taint of pruriency of Sterne's own), the great charm of the book lies in the masterly delineation

of the characters—Uncle Toby, Corporal Trim, the widow Wadman and the rest—that he creates, and in the interest of separate episodes. In the 'Sentimental Journey' there is, of course, no attempt at a story, it being a narrative of the incidents of travel of the writer, with suitable reflections thereon. The famous starling of the hotel at Paris is as good a specimen of Sterne's sentimental vein as can be conveniently detached for insertion here:—

'I was interrupted in the heyday of this soliloquy with a voice which I took to be that of a child, which complained "it could not get out." I looked up and down the passage, and seeing neither man, woman, nor child, I went out without further attention.

'In my return back through the passage I heard the same words repeated twice over; and looking up, I saw it was a starling hung in a little cage. "I can't get out; I can't get out," said the starling.

'I stood looking at the bird; and to every person who came through the passage it ran fluttering to the side towards which they approached it, with the same lamentation of its captivity: "I can't get out," said the starling. "God help thee," said I; "but I'll let thee out, cost what it will!" so I turned about the cage to get the door. It was twisted and double twisted so fast with wire there was no getting it open without pulling the cage to pieces. I took both hands to it.

'The bird flew to the place where I was attempting his deliverance, and thrusting his head through the trellis, pressed his breast against it, as if impatient. "I fear, poor creature," said I, "I cannot set thee at liberty." "No," said the starling; "I can't get out; I can't get out."

'I vow I never had my affections more tenderly awakened; nor do I remember an incident in my life where the dissipated spirits, to which my reason had been a bubble, were so suddenly called home. Mechanical as the notes were, yet so true in time to nature were they chanted, that in one moment they overthrew all my systematic reasonings upon the Bastille; and I heavily walked upstairs, unsaying every word I had said in going down them.

"Disguise thyself as thou wilt, still, Slavery," said I,—"still thou art a bitter draught; and, though thousands in all ages have been made to drink of thee, thou art no less bitter on that account. 'Tis thou, thrice sweet and gracious goddess," addressing myself to Liberty, "whom all in public or in private worship, whose taste is grateful, and ever will be so, till Nature herself will change. No tint of words can spot thy snowy mantle, nor chymic power turn thy sceptre into iron; with thee, to smile upon him as he eats his crust, the swain is happier than his monarch, from whose court thou art exiled. Gracious Heaven!" cried I, kneeling down upon the last step but one in my ascent, "grant me but health, thou great Bestower of it, and give me but this fair goddess as my companion,—and shower down thy mitres, if it seem good unto Thy Divine Providence, upon those heads which are aching for them!"

A fine example of Sterne's mingling of the humorous and pathetic is to be found in the 'Story of Lefevre' in 'Tristram Shandy,' from which we take the following lines:—

"In the second place," . . . continued my uncle Toby, "when thou offeredst him whatever was in my house, thou shouldst have offered him my house too. A sick brother officer should have the best quarters, Trim; and if we had him with us we could tend and look to him. Thou art an excellent nurse thyself, Trim; and what with thy care of him, and the old woman's, and his boy's, and mine together, we might recruit him again at once, and set him upon his legs. In a fortnight or three weeks," added my uncle Toby, smiling, "he might march."—"He will never march, an' please your Honour, in this world," said the Corporal.—"He *will* march," said my uncle Toby, rising up from the side of the bed with one shoe off.—"An' please your Honour," said the Corporal, "he will never march but to his grave."—"He *shall* march," cried my uncle Toby, marching the foot which had a shoe on, though without advancing an inch,—"*he shall* march to his regiment,"—"He cannot stand it," said the Corporal.—"He shall be supported," said my uncle Toby.—"He'll drop at last," said the Corporal, "and what will become of his boy?"—"He *shall not* drop," said my uncle Toby firmly.—"Ah, well-a-day! do what we can for him," said Trim maintaining his point, "the poor soul will die."—"He *shall not die*, by G—," cried my uncle Toby.

'The Accusing Spirit, which flew up to Heaven's chancery with the oath, blushed as he gave it in; and the Recording Angel, as he wrote it down, dropped a tear upon the word, and blotted it out for ever.'

Of Goldsmith, as a poet and dramatist, we have already spoken. Before discussing him as a prose-writer

Oliver
Goldsmith:
1728—1774.

we may conveniently give an outline of his life. He was born at Pallas (Longford, Ireland), of which his father, the Rev. Charles Goldsmith, a Protestant of English extraction, was then pastor, obtaining the living of Lissoy a couple of years after his son's birth. It was there that Oliver received his youthful education from the village schoolmaster, and from his memory of his surroundings at Lissoy the poet drew many of the pictures we have found in 'The Deserted Village.' Goldsmith in due course went to Trinity College, Dublin—which he entered as a sizar—and managed to take his degree there in 1749. His father had died meanwhile, but his uncle Contarine and other friends supplied him with a little money, and he started to study medicine in Edinburgh, having previously

made unsuccessful attempts at the Church and the Law. Leaving Edinburgh, Goldsmith set out for the Continent, going to Leyden and thence through Holland, Switzerland and Italy. We see the fruits of his foreign travel in 'The Traveller.' In that poem he touches on his wanderings—probably not with literal accuracy—and he mentions how he often led the

'Sportive choir
With tuneless pipe, beside the murmuring Loire ;
Where shading elms along the margin grew ;
And, freshened from the wave, the zephyr flew ;
And haply, though my harsh touch faltering still
But mocked all tune, and marred the dancers' skill,
Yet would the village praise my wondrous power.'

In 'The Vicar of Wakefield' he gives a chapter (xx.) entitled 'The History of a Philosophic Vagabond pursuing Novelty, but losing Content,' much of which is probably autobiographical. A quotation or two is interesting in connection with the author's life, and will serve to give some idea of his style; the student, however, must be warned against applying literally to an author's life every statement he may choose to make in the first person. Thus the Philosophic Vagabond describes his journeying from Louvain to Paris :

'I was now too far from home to think of returning, so I resolved to go forward. I had some knowledge of music, with a tolerable voice ; I now turned what was once my amusement into a present means of subsistence. I passed among the harmless peasants of Flanders, and among such of the French as were poor enough to be merry ; for I ever found them sprightly in proportion to their wants. Whenever I approached a peasant's house towards nightfall I played one of my most merry tunes, and that procured me not only a lodging, but subsistence for the next day.'

Goldsmith came back from his travels as resourceless and as poor as he went. When he returned to London (1756) he was without money and without a profession, save that he had obtained—or is said to have obtained—the degree of M.D. at Padua. Under these circumstances he took to teaching, but this proved unsuitable to him. Thus he makes the Philosophic Vagabond's cousin describe the life of an usher :

"Ay," cried he, "this is, indeed, a very pretty career that has been

chalked out for you. I have been an usher to a boarding-school myself, and may I die by an anodyne necklace, but I had rather be an under-turnkey in Newgate. I was up early and late. I was browbeaten by the master, hated for my ugly face by the mistress, worried by the boys within, and never permitted to stir out to meet civility abroad. But are you sure you are fit for a school? Let me examine you a little. Have you been bred apprentice to the business?" "No." "Then you won't do for a school. Can you dress the boys' hair?" "No." "Then you won't do for a school. Have you had the small-pox?" "No." "Then you won't do for a school. Can you lie threes in a bed?" "No." "Then you will never do for a school. Have you got a good stomach?" "Yes." "Then you will by no means do for a school. No, sir; if you are for a genteel, easy profession, bind yourself seven years as an apprentice to turn a cutler's wheel; but avoid a school by any means. Yet come," continued he, "I see you are a lad of spirit and some learning. What do you think of commencing author with me?"

'I resolved,' he says, 'to accept his proposal; and having the highest respect for literature, hailed the *Antiqua Mater* of Grub Street with reverence.'

Before Goldsmith took to writing as a means of support, he had tried to earn a living by medicine, working as an assistant to a City apothecary, and establishing himself in Southwark. He endeavoured subsequently to get an appointment as ship's surgeon and as medical officer in the East Indies, fortunately without success. Meanwhile he was managing to exist by correcting proofs for the great Mr. Richardson and by writing for periodicals. In 1757 he was receiving a regular salary from Griffiths, the owner of the *Monthly Review*, in return for devoting his pen entirely to that periodical. Quarrelling with Griffiths, he tried teaching and physic again, but drifted back into authorship before long. His first separate publication was 'An Inquiry into the Present State of Polite Learning in Europe,' which appeared in 1759, and from that date onwards it is as a writer solely that we may regard Goldsmith. Later in this year appeared *The Bee*, a weekly magazine, consisting of essays, stories, etc., written solely by Goldsmith. This had a short life—there were only eight numbers—but its writer easily found work on other periodicals. To the 'Public Ledger' he contributed a series of letters in the character of a Chinaman visiting Europe; these were collected and augmented, being in some respects altered on their publication (in 1762) as 'The Citizen of the World.' In this delightful

series of essays, written with the object of letting us see ourselves as others (might) see us, appear the famous 'Man in Black' and the incomparable 'Beau Tibbs.' Goldsmith was now getting known as a man of letters, and his life from this time would have been fairly prosperous but for his carelessness and improvidence in money matters. He took chambers in Wine Office Court, and having made the acquaintance of Dr. Johnson in 1760—an acquaintance which ripened into the closest friendship—began to frequent the society of the most famous men of letters of his day. We see him now consorting with Johnson, Burke, Reynolds, Garrick, and the other members of the Literary Club, and we presently hear him praised as poet, as novelist, and as dramatist. His reputation in the first character was established immediately on the appearance of 'The Traveller' (1764), while his fame as a novelist was made by 'The Vicar of Wakefield,' which, though published in 1766, had been written (and paid for by the bookseller¹) two years before. From the 'Vicar of Wakefield' extracts have already been given; it is a book, however, which no student of this period of our literature must omit to read for himself. A 'prose idyll' it was called by Goethe, who was enchanted with its charming simplicity, its poetic idealization of common life. "'The Vicar of Wakefield,'" says Mr. Black, 'considered structurally, follows the Book of Job. You take a good man, overwhelm him with successive misfortunes, show the pure flame of his soul burning in the midst of the darkness, and then, as the reward of his patience, and fortitude, and submission, restore him gradually to happiness, with even larger flocks and herds than before. The machinery by which all this is brought about is in "The Vicar of Wakefield" the weak part of the story. The plot is full of wild improbabilities—in fact, the expedients by which all the members of the family are brought together and made happy at the same time are nothing short of desperate. It is quite clear, too, that the author does not know what to make of the episode

¹ When Goldsmith was arrested for a debt he owed his landlady (1764), Johnson went to visit him, and learned that he had a novel written. 'I looked into and saw its merits; told the landlady I should soon return; and, having gone to a bookseller, sold it for sixty pounds,' says Johnson.—(Boswell.)

of Olivia and her husband; they are allowed to drop through. We leave him playing the French horn at a relation's house, while she, in her father's home, is supposed to be unnoticed, so much are they all taken up with the rejoicings over the double wedding. It is very probable that when Goldsmith began the story he had no very definite plot concocted, and that it was only when the much-persecuted Vicar had to be restored to happiness that he found the entanglements surrounding him, and had to make frantic efforts to break through them. But, be this as it may, it is not for the plot that people now read "The Vicar of Wakefield"; it is not the intricacies of the story that have made it the delight of the world. Surely human nature must be very much the same, when this simple description of a quiet English home went straight to the heart of nations in both hemispheres.¹

The series of great eighteenth-century novels ends with 'Humphry Clinker,' and the minor works of
 Minor novels and novelists. during the last half of the eighteenth century need not detain us long. Sarah Fielding, the sister of the great novelist, published the 'Adventures of David
 Sarah Fielding : Simple' in 1744. 'The Life and Adventures of Peter Wilkins' is a tale of the adventures of a ship-
 1714-1768. wrecked man, published in 1750, which owes something to Swift and a good deal more to Defoe: its authorship is put down to one Robert Paltock. 'Rasselas'
 'Peter Wilkins.' (1759) is Johnson's one romance: we speak of it with the rest of his prose (ch. xxxii.). Charles
 'Rasselas.' Johnstone's 'Chrysal; or, The Adventures of a Guinea' (1760)
 'Chrysal.' is a satirical account of the motives and actions of the different people through whose hands the coin
 passes.² Horace Walpole's 'Castle of Otranto' (1765) professed to be a translation of a mediæval Italian romance.
 Horace Walpole : When Walpole wrote it, his head was, he says, 'filled
 1717-1797. with Gothic story,' and he imagines he is giving

¹ Among the vast quantity of Goldsmith's other writings—mostly compilations—may be mentioned his 'History of Animated Nature,' and *Historics of England, Greece, etc.*

² Scott has pointed out that the title and plan of the book may have been taken from Dr. Bathurst's 'Adventures of a Halfpenny,' published in *The Adventurer*, 1738.

us a genuine picture of the 'dark ages' by his delineation of the dreadful castle, with the enormous magic helmet, its spectre marching 'sedately but dejected,' and so forth. Walpole's book is more interesting from being one of the earliest of 'historical' novels, and from the fact that it indicates the spreading taste for the 'romantic' of which evidence is given us in the same year by the publication of 'Percy's Reliques' (see p. 461), than from its literary merits.¹ It is curious to notice that Walpole, Chatterton, and Macpherson each tried to pass off as genuine relics of antiquity the works which make them of interest in the history of the revived taste for the romantic. Henry Brooke's 'Fool of Quality' (1766) is a

'Fool of poor mixture of tedious narrative and pompous Quality.' sentiment, which has, however, been highly praised in our time for the piety of its teaching; the most interesting fact about it is that the work was expurgated and bowdlerised by John Wesley, who had it published under the name of the 'History of Harry, Earl of Moreland.' Henry Mackenzie's 'Man of Feeling' (1771) was written at a time when Sterne's 'Tristram Shandy,' and still more his 'Sentimental Journey,' were the objects of almost universal admiration. A large section of

the public that wept with Clarissa, and went into raptures over the fine feelings exhibited by Grandison, had never appreciated to the full the outspoken freedom of Tom Jones; many must have been utterly disgusted by the brutal coarseness of Smollett and his imitators, and to these, no doubt, the rich mine of tenderness and sentiment that Sterne had worked may have seemed full of gold, which needed but freeing from earthy refuse to purify it. Such a one is Mackenzie, 'whose timid, delicate hero weeps,' as Taine says, 'five or six times a day; who grows consumptive through sensibility, dares not broach his love till the point of death, and dies in broaching it.' Mackenzie, however, has none of Sterne's impurity; and, in spite of an abnormal amount of tearfulness and super-sensibility, the 'Man of Feeling,' is a

¹ Horatio Walpole (1717-1797)—afterwards Earl of Orford—was a patron of arts and literature, a dabbler in them himself, antiquary, amateur painter, etc. His fame is mainly due to his published Correspondence, which shares with that of Lady Mary Wortley Montagu the praise of being the best in our language.

really touching story and a very well written one. The short concluding chapter we quote here; it is a good example of the sweeter fruit of Sterne's teaching:

'He [Harley, the hero] had hinted that he should like to be buried in a certain spot near the grave of his mother. This is a weakness; but it is universally incident to humanity. 'Tis at least a memorial for those who survive; for some, indeed, a slender memorial will serve; and the soft affections, when they are busy that way, will build their structures, were it but on the paring of a nail.

'He was buried in the place he had desired. It was shaded by an old tree, the only one in the churchyard, in which was a cavity worn by time. I have sat with him in it and counted the tombs. The last time we passed there we thought he looked wistfully on the tree. There was a branch of it that bent towards us, waving in the wind; he waved his hand as if he mimicked its motion. There was something predictive in his look! Perhaps it is foolish to remark it, but there are times and places when I am a child at those things.

'I sometimes visit his grave; I sit in the hollow of the tree. It is worth a thousand homilies; every noble feeling rises within me! every beat of my heart awakens a virtue! but it will make you hate the world. No; there is such an air of gentleness around, that I can hate nothing; but as to the world—I pity the men of it.'

Clara Reeve's novel 'The Old English Baron' (1777) had a sub-title on its first appearance which informed the reader that it was a 'Gothic' story. The lady avows herself the imitator of Walpole's 'Castle of Otranto'; her design is, she says, 'to unite the most attractive and interesting circumstances of *ancient romance* and modern novel': it brings us a little, a very little, nearer to the historical novels of Scott. A more famous authoress than Miss Reeve is Miss Burney, whose 'Evelina' delighted the town in 1778. Macaulay, whose admiration of this book has done much to preserve its fame, gives Miss Burney the high praise of having purified the English novel by showing 'that a tale might be written in which both the fashionable and the vulgar life of London might be exhibited with great force, and with broad comic humour, and which yet should not contain a single line inconsistent with rigid morality, or even with virgin delicacy.' This is, perhaps, a little exaggerated, but certainly among the minor novels between the death of Smollett and the opening years of the next century, Miss Burney's novel has

Clara
Reeve:
1725-1803.

Frances
Burney:
1752-1810.

merits of its own that claim for it the first place. 'Evelina' is a story told in letters, which is not the only resemblance it bears to Richardson's work. It describes the adventures of a young and beautiful orphan, the child of a high-born mother who had made a *mésalliance*. Miss Burney's sense of humour is very keen, and her descriptions of society are vivid and witty; in delineating character she is scarcely so strong, having an irresistible leaning towards caricature; her manner of writing in her first novel is fresh, simple and natural. Her style, however, underwent considerable alteration as she advanced in years—owing chiefly, says Macaulay, to the influence of Johnson—and her later writings are written in cumbrous, stiff phraseology, while the matter of them is never of the excellence of her first work. She became a Lady-in-Waiting on Queen Charlotte after the publication of 'Cecilia' (a rather poor novel), and from that time her literary career was practically over. She began to write again, however, when, after leaving the court, she had married General D'Arblay, a French refugee, whose property had been confiscated at the Revolution. An attempt at tragedy, 'Edwin and Elgitha' (1795), met with no success. A third novel, 'Camilla' (1796), is only to be mentioned because it is the work of the author of 'Evelina.' Towards the end of her life she compiled the 'Memoirs of Dr. Charles Burney,' her father, and her own memoirs—'The Diary and Letters of Madame D'Arblay'—were published soon after her death.

It is worth noticing in connection with our literary history that in the latter part of the eighteenth century Women writers. there first appears a considerable number of women writers. The Elizabethan romances were, it has been alleged (perhaps not on very good grounds) written chiefly for women, and the novels of the latter part of the nineteenth century are (it is said) written mainly by women. In the middle of the eighteenth century we find among the great novelists that Richardson might be thought to appeal to women mainly, Smollett almost entirely to men, and Fielding to man. Between this time and the close of the eighteenth century a band of women fiction-writers comes into view, among whom we have seen Sarah Fielding, Clara

Reeve and Frances Burney,¹ the last of whom is the only one of any great importance whom we meet with till we reach Maria Edgeworth, whose first story appears in 1800, and Jane Austen, who had written 'Sense and Sensibility' and 'Pride and Prejudice' before the century closed, though they did not appear till a dozen years later.

Among less remarkable female writers who produced works of fiction during the latter part of the century we may just mention Anne Radcliffe (1764-1823), Eliza Inchbald (1753-1821), Anna Barbauld (1743-1825), and Charlotte Smith (1749-1806). Of these the first is the most noteworthy; her most famous works, 'The Castles of Athlin and Dunbayne' (1789), 'The Romance of the Forest' (1791), 'The Mysteries of Udolpho' (1794), are sensational stories of gloomy and mysterious deeds, in which the supernatural plays a considerable part; she may be said to have originated that particular kind of writing—for Walpole's 'Castle of Otranto' is but a feeble thing regarded as a means of making the blood curdle—which is now generally to be found in what is called the 'shilling shocker.' A less respectable writer who seems to have been influenced by her and by Walpole is Matthew Lewis (1775-1818), whose 'The Monk' (1795) and 'The Bravo of Venice' (1804) are his most notable achievements.²

Two or three works of fiction remain to be noticed. One of these is 'The History of the Caliph Vathek,' by 'Vathek,' William Beckford (1760-1844); it is an extravagant 'Arabian Nights' story, which shows its author to have been a man of considerable humour as well as exuberant fancy. Beckford is said to have written it in French in three days: it first appeared in an English 'unauthorized' garb in 1784. A novel quite unlike any of the foregoing, and (according to

¹ Sheridan's mother may also be mentioned here, as the authoress of the 'Memoirs of Miss Sidney Biddulph' (1761). The earlier female writers of fiction—Aphra Behn (1642-1689), Dela Riviere Manley (1672-1724), and Eliza Haywood (1698-1756), are mainly remarkable for the immorality of their works. Of a more honourable character is 'The Female Quixote' (1752) of Charlotte Lennox (1720-1804) written in ridicule of the inflated romances then popular.

² Lewis (who is known as 'Monk' Lewis) was the author of several plays and a considerable amount of verse. His 'Journal of a West India Proprietor, kept during a residence in Jamaica,' has been highly praised by Coleridge.

Hazlitt) 'utterly unlike anything else that ever was written,' 'Caleb is 'Caleb Williams,' which appeared in 1794. Its Williams.' author was William Godwin (1756-1836), the philosopher whose 'Inquiry concerning Political Justice' was published in 1793. 'Caleb Williams' is the work of an ardent democrat, who believes thoroughly in the principles that were rife among the French revolutionaries. The purpose of the book is to expose the injustice of the way in which our society is constructed, and to urge the forming of it so as to give more power to the weak in their struggle against the wealthy.

CHAPTER XXXII.

OTHER EIGHTEENTH-CENTURY PROSE WRITERS.

TWO 'occasional' writers whose names are indissolubly linked together are Addison and Steele, of whom we have already had occasion to speak in connection with the growth of periodical literature: of Addison's¹ verse and Steele's plays nothing further need be added here. It is as 'journalists' that they are now chiefly important to us. We have seen Defoe projecting and publishing his *Review* in Newgate (1704), and noted Swift's 'Bickerstaff Pamphlets.' In the *Tatler* (founded 1709) Steele, using the now popular pseudonym of 'Isaac Bickerstaff,' promised to give the world 'accounts of gallantry, pleasure, and entertainment under the article of "White's Coffee-house"; learning under the title of "Grecian"; foreign and domestic news . . . from St. James's Coffee-house,' and so forth. Defoe's Scandal Club is imitated in the *Tatlers' Club* at the Trumpet, where we find Isaac Bickerstaff, with his half-sister, Jenny Distaff, Sir Jeffrey Notch, Major Matchlock, and Dick Reptile. The bulk of the *Tatler* papers is Steele's unaided work; but a certain number of them are by Steele and Addison, a certain number by Addison alone, and a few by other writers. The *Spectator* (1711-2), which succeeded the *Tatler*, was also edited by Steele, though Addison's contributions are slightly more numerous and much more important. Some of Addison's best work is to be found in the 'Sir Roger de

¹ Addison was the son of the Rev. Lancelot Addison Rector of Milston, Wiltshire (where Joseph was born), and afterwards Dean of Lichfield. He was educated at the Charterhouse and at Oxford, where he obtained a fellowship, and was intended to take orders, but did not do so. By the influence of Charles Montague and Lord Somers, he obtained an allowance, which enabled him to travel abroad for awhile (1700-2), but which was discontinued on the death of Queen Anne. He was appointed (in 1704) a Commissioner of Excise, produced 'The Campaign,' was hailed as the literary champion of the Whigs, and was made Under Secretary of State in 1706, and (in 1708) Secretary to the Lord-Lieutenant of Ireland. He entered Parliament as member for Malmesbury, was made Secretary to the Regents on the death of Queen Anne (1714), and was in the same year made Chief Secretary of State for Ireland.

Coverley' essays, most of which are by him. In these Addison admirably develops Steele's idea. These lines are extracted from the paper describing a country Sunday spent with Sir Roger:—

'As Sir Roger is landlord to the whole congregation, he keeps them in very good order, and will suffer nobody to sleep in it besides himself; for if by chance he has been surprised into a short nap at sermon, upon recovering out of it he stands up and looks about him, and if he sees anybody else nodding, either wakes them himself or sends his servant to them. Several other of the old knight's particularities break out upon these occasions. Sometimes he will be lengthening out a verse in the singing Psalms half a minute after the rest of the congregation have done with it; sometimes when he is pleased with the matter of his devotion, he pronounces amen three or four times to the same prayer; and sometimes stands up when everybody else is upon their knees, to count the congregation, or see if any of his tenants are missing.

'I was yesterday very much surprised to hear my old friend in the midst of the service calling out to one John Matthews to mind what he was about, and not disturb the congregation. This John Matthews, it seems, is remarkable for being an idle fellow, and at that time was kicking his heels for his diversion. This authority of the knight, though exerted in that odd manner which accompanies him in all circumstances of life, has a very good effect upon the parish, who are not polite enough to see anything ridiculous in his behaviour; besides that the general good sense and worthiness of his character make his friends observe these little singularities as foils that rather set off than blemish his good qualities.'

We pass from these to the brief consideration of the historians, philosophers, and 'miscellaneous' prose writers, not yet dealt with. One of the first of these, in point of time, is St. John, Viscount Bolingbroke.

Bolingbroke's literary work began when his career as a statesman was over. Having entered Parliament in 1701, he was head of the Tory Ministry which fell with the death of Queen Anne. He fled to the Continent, being suspected of plotting with the Stuarts, but returned in 1723. Upon his return he wrote in the *Craftsman*, and also produced his 'Dissertation upon Parties' (1735). His 'Reflections on Exile' and his 'Letter to Sir William Wyndham' were written during his stay in France. Bolingbroke had ever loved the society of men of letters—as, for instance, Prior and Swift in Queen Anne's reign—and in the years from 1725 to Pope's death he was

Henry
St. John
(Viscount
Bolingbroke),
1678—1751.

the close friend of that poet. Among the more famous of his writings are his letters on 'The Spirit of Patriotism' and 'The Idea of a Patriot King.' He left a considerable amount of unpublished writings, which were edited by Mallet. From 'A Letter to Mr. Pope' we extract the following specimen of this brilliant writer's style :

'If I have said thus much in this place concerning natural philosophy, it has not been without good reason. I consider theology and ethics as the first of sciences in pre-eminence of rank. But I consider the constant contemplation of nature—by which I mean the whole system of God's works, as far as it lies open to us—as the common spring of all sciences, and even of these. What has been said, agreeably to this notion, seems to me evidently true ; and yet metaphysical divines and philosophers proceed in direct contradiction to it, and have thereby, if I mistake not, bewildered themselves, and a great part of mankind, in such inextricable labyrinths of hypothetical reasoning, that few men can find their way back, and none can find it forward into the road of truth. To dwell long, and on some points always, in particular knowledge, tries the patience of these impetuous philosophers. They fly to generals. To consider attentively even the minutest phenomena of body and mind mortifies their pride. Rather than creep up slowly, *a posteriori*, to a little general knowledge, they soar at once as far and as high as imagination can carry them. From thence they descend again, armed with systems and arguments *a priori* ; and regardless how these agree or clash with the phenomena of nature, they impose them on mankind.'

A fellow-writer with Bolingbroke—united to him by hatred of Walpole—in the *Craftsman* was the Earl of Chesterfield. His most famous writings are the well-known 'Letters to his Son.' Chesterfield was by way of being a patron of learning and a critic of literature. In two essays written in the *World* he speaks in complimentary terms of Mr. Johnson's Dictionary, then just on the point of completion :

Philip
Stanhope
(Earl of
Chester-
field):
1694-1773.

'Many people have imagined that so extensive a work should have been best performed by a number of persons, who should have taken their several departments of examining, sifting, winnowing (I borrow this image from the Italian *Crusca*), purifying and finally fixing our language, by incorporating their respective funds into one joint stock. But whether this opinion be true or false, I think the public in general, and the republic of letters in particular, greatly obliged to Mr. Johnson for having undertaken and executed so great and desirable a work. Perfection is not to be expected from man ; but if we are to judge by the various works of Mr. Johnson already published, we have good reason to believe that he will bring this as near to perfection as any one

man could do. The plan of it which he published some years ago seems to me a proof of it.'

However much Lord Chesterfield might think the public obliged to Mr. Johnson, Mr. Johnson took care to prevent the public thinking him obliged to my Lord Chesterfield :

Samuel
Johnson :
1709-1784.

'Seven years, my lord, have now passed since I waited in your outward rooms or was repulsed from your door ; during which time I have been pushing on my work through difficulties of which it is useless to complain, and have brought it at last to the verge of publication without one act of assistance, one word of encouragement, and one smile of favour. Such treatment I did not expect, for I never had a patron before. . . . Is not a patron, my lord, one who looks with unconcern on a man struggling for life in the water, and when he has reached the ground encumbers him with help ? The notice which you have been pleased to take of my labours, had it been early, had been kind ; but it has been delayed till I am indifferent, and cannot enjoy it ; till I am solitary, and cannot impart it ; till I am known, and do not want it. I hope it is no very cynical asperity not to confess obligations where no benefit has been received, or to be unwilling that the public should consider me as owing that to a patron which Providence has enabled me to do for myself.'

This extract has been quoted not merely as a specimen of Johnson's style at its best—vigorous, direct, and without a trace of his worse mannerisms—and not only as referring to an interesting episode in Johnson's career, but also to remind the young student that Johnson is looked upon as the first considerable man of letters who dispensed with a patron. The men of letters in the eighteenth century who looked only to the booksellers for support had a hard battle to fight, but they won it, and before its close the patronage system was practically defunct.

Samuel Johnson was born in 1709 at Lichfield, his father being a bookseller there. After a fair school education and two years spent at home, where he seems to have laid in a vast store of book-learning, he went to Pembroke College, Oxford, in 1728. During his stay there his father, who had long been in struggling circumstances, became bankrupt. Johnson left the University without taking a degree, his career being probably cut short by his father's difficulties. Johnson's life at the University seems to have been a painful one, owing alike to his extreme poverty and to the melan-

choly which beset him throughout his whole life, and which amounted in his case to a real disease. Johnson had now to earn his bread—his father died in 1731, leaving his son twenty pounds—and to do this he attempted to live as an usher. This proving unsatisfactory in the extreme, he tried to support himself by writing for a provincial paper (he settled in Birmingham for a time in 1733), by translating for a bookseller¹ and by similar means. In 1735 he married a widow (Mrs. Porter) twenty years older than himself. They took a house at Edial, near Lichfield, and set up a boarding-school. This turned out a failure, and in 1737 Johnson started for London to try his fortunes there. He was accompanied by one of his few pupils, David Garrick.

We have few details of Johnson's early literary career, but it is evident that he was an honest hack writer, toiling hard to keep his wife and himself in independence. He wrote for Cave, of the *Gentleman's Magazine*, and among other work for him produced Parliamentary reports under the name of 'The Senate of Lilliput.' Among his companions at this time was the miserable (and worthless) Richard Savage,² whose life Johnson wrote (1744), and subsequently inserted among the 'Lives of the Poets,' where it is ludicrously out of proportion to the importance of its subject, but is a most interesting example of its author's powers. In 1738 appeared his first poem, 'London,' of which we have already spoken. It was received with a good deal of favour (from Pope among others), but did not materially benefit its author: he received ten guineas for it. He continued working for Cave and the other booksellers during the next ten years, his reputation rising, but his circumstances apparently not much the better for it. In 1747, however, he had drawn up the plan of his Dictionary, which he sent to Lord Chesterfield. The work lasted seven years (instead of the three that he had allowed for it), during which time he received for it some £1,600, out of which, however, he had to pay his helpers. In 1749 two ventures outside the mere book-making trade mark

¹ He made an English version from the French of Father Lobo's 'Voyage to Abyssinia.'

² Savage (1697-1743) was the author of 'The Wanderer' and other second-rate verse. He endeavoured to levy blackmail on the Countess of Macclesfield by declaring himself her illegitimate son, a story which Johnson believed.

Johnson's career. His best poem, 'The Vanity of Human Wishes,' was published, and his play of 'Irene' (written in its author's Lichfield days) was produced at Drury Lane, where Garrick was manager. The play was not a success (nor deserved to be), but it brought Johnson about twenty times as much money as the poem did. Next year Johnson started *The Rambler*, a series of essays which appeared twice a week for two years, ending in March, 1752, the month in which his wife died. The Dictionary and *The Rambler* are the literary works to which Johnson chiefly owed his great fame among his contemporaries. The grave, somewhat heavy philosophizing of the essayist seems to have established him as the great moralist of the day, while the Dictionary was looked upon as pre-eminently a work of scholarship. A short extract from a *Rambler* may give the reader some idea both of Johnson's plan in the work and of his style :

'Of the great force of preconceived opinions I had many proofs when I first entered upon this weekly labour. My readers having, from the performances of my predecessors, established an idea of unconnected essays, to which they believed all future authors under a necessity of conforming, were impatient of the least deviation from their system ; and numerous remonstrances were accordingly made by each, as he found his favourite subject omitted or delayed. Some were angry that the Rambler did not, like the Spectator, introduce himself to the acquaintance of the public by an account of his own birth and studies, an enumeration of his adventures, and a description of his physiognomy. Others soon began to remark that he was a solemn, serious, dictatorial writer, without sprightliness or gaiety, and called out with vehemence for mirth and humour. Another admonished him to have a special eye upon the various clubs of this great city, and informed him that much of the Spectator's vivacity was laid out upon such assemblies. He has been censured for not imitating the politeness of his predecessors, having hitherto neglected to take the ladies under his protection, and give them rules for the just opposition of colours, and the proper dimensions of ruffles and pinners. He has been requested by one to fix a particular censure upon those matrons who play at cards with spectacles. And another is very much offended whenever he meets with a speculation in which naked precepts are comprised without the illustration of examples and characters.

* * *
 'I cannot but consider myself amidst this tumult of criticism as a ship in a poetical tempest, impelled at the same time by opposite winds, and dashed by the waves from every quarter, but held upright by the contrariety of the assailants, and secured, in some measure, by multi-

licity of distress. Had the opinions of my censurers been unanimous, it might perhaps have overset my resolution; but since I find them at variance with each other, I can, without scruple, neglect them, and endeavour to gain the favour of the public by following the direction of my own reason, and indulging the sallies of my own imagination.'

Johnson's fame was now very great, and he was coming to be looked upon as the great monarch of the world of letters. 'His name was highest at this time [*i.e.*, 1755, the year of the publication of the Dictionary] in the ranks of pure literature,' says Mr. Stephen. 'The fame of Warburton' possibly bulked larger for the moment . . . but Warburton had subsided into episcopal repose, and literature had been for him a stepping-stone rather than an ultimate aim. Hume had written works of far more enduring influence than Johnson; but they were little read, though generally abused, and scarcely belong to the purely literary history. The first volume of his "History of England" had appeared (1754), but had not succeeded. The second was just coming out. Richardson was still giving laws to his little seraglio of adoring women; Fielding had died (1754), worn out by labour and dissipation; Smollett was active in the literary trade, but not in such a way as to increase his own dignity or that of his employment; Gray was slowly writing a few lines of exquisite verse in his retirement at Cambridge; two young Irish adventurers, Burke and Goldsmith, were just coming to London to try their fortune; Adam Smith made his first experiment as an author by reviewing the Dictionary in the *Edinburgh Review*; Robertson had not yet appeared as a historian; Gibbon was at Lausanne, repenting of his old brief lapse into Catholicism as an act of undergraduate's folly; and Cowper, after three years of "giggling and making giggle" with Thurlow in an attorney's office, was now entered at the Temple, and amusing himself at times with literature in company with such small men of letters as Colman, Bonnell Thornton, and Lloyd. It was a slack tide of literature; the generation of Pope had passed away and left

* William Warburton (1698-1779) was the author of several works on theology, and his name for scholarship and learning stood very high, but his works have not been considered of much permanent value. He published a defence of Pope's 'Essay on Man' against certain accusations of Deism, which led to a personal friendship between him and the poet, who adopted him as his apologist and editor. Warburton became Bishop of Gloucester in 1769.

no successors, and no writer of the time could be put in competition with the giant now known as "Dictionary Johnson."

Johnson, however—mainly owing to his indolence and to his generosity—was far from being in easy circumstances. In 1756 we find Richardson lending him a small sum to release him from arrest for debt, and three years later we see him writing his novel 'Rasselas'¹ to defray the expenses of his mother's funeral. It was soon after this that Johnson was relieved from the pressure of want by the king's awarding to him a pension of £300 (in 1762); his life from just about that time we have drawn for us as no other man's has ever been. It is not from Johnson's written works that we know him to be a great man; indeed, if we had only these to judge him by, we should assign him a creditable place among the essayists as a man who wrote sound common-sense in a cumbrous Latinized idiom; among the poets as a writer of dignified heroic couplets; among the story-tellers as author of a not very remarkable didactic tale; among scholars as the compiler of a Dictionary which showed considerable research and diligence, but has necessarily—like all mere works of scholarship—been long superseded; and as a critic, for his 'Lives of the Poets,' which is, we take it, his best literary work. But Boswell's 'loose-flowing, careless-looking work,' as Carlyle says, 'is as a picture by one of Nature's own artists; the best possible resemblance of a Reality; like the very image thereof in a clear mirror. . . . How the babbling Bozzy, inspired only by love and the recognition and vision which love can lend, epitomizes nightly the words of Wisdom, the deeds and

¹ The book takes its name from its hero, Rasselas, Prince of Abyssinia, with whose doings, thoughts and moralizings it deals. Its success, says Macaulay, 'was great, though such ladies as Miss Lydia Langrish must have been grievously disappointed when they found that the new volume was little more than a dissertation on the author's favourite theme, the "vanity of human wishes"; that the Prince of Abyssinia was without a mistress, and the princess without a lover; and that the story set the hero and heroine down exactly where it had taken them up. The *style* was the subject of much eager controversy. . . . Many readers pronounced the writer a pompous pedant, who would never use a word of two syllables where it was possible to use a word of six, and who could not make a waiting woman relate her adventures without balancing every noun with another noun, and every epithet with another epithet. Another party, not less zealous, cited with delight numerous passages in which weighty meaning was expressed with accuracy and illustrated with splendour. Both the censure and the praise were merited.'

aspects of Wisdom, and so, by little and little, unconsciously works together for us a whole *Johnsoniad*.' As a specimen of Boswell's manner and of Johnson's conversation, let us take an extract from chap. xiv., where Boswell tells how he for the first time takes 'the liberty of waiting on Mr.¹ Johnson at his chambers' in the Temple :

'He received me very courteously ; but it must be confessed that his apartment and furniture and morning dress were sufficiently uncouth. His brown suit of clothes looked very rusty ; he had on a little, old, shrivelled, unpowdered wig, which was too small for his head ; his shirt-neck and knees of his breeches were loose : his black worsted stockings ill drawn up ; and he had a pair of unbuckled shoes by way of slippers. But all these slovenly particularities were forgotten the moment that he began to talk. Some gentlemen, whom I do not recollect, were sitting with him, and when they went away, I also rose ; but he said to me, "Nay, don't go." "Sir," said I, "I am afraid that I intrude upon you. It is benevolent to allow me to sit and hear you." He seemed pleased with this compliment, which I sincerely paid him, and answered, "Sir, I am obliged to any man who visits me." I have preserved the following minute of what passed this day :

"Madness frequently discovers itself merely by unnecessary deviation from the usual modes of the world. My poor friend Smart showed the disturbance of his mind by falling upon his knees and saying his prayers in the street, or in any other unusual place. Now, although, rationally speaking, it is greater madness not to pray at all, than to pray as Smart did, I am afraid there are so many who do not pray, that their understanding is not called in question."

'Concerning this unfortunate poet, Christopher Smart, who was confined in a mad-house, he had at another time the following conversation with Dr. Burney : *Burney*. How does poor Smart do, sir ? is he likely to recover ? *Johnson*. It seems as if his mind had ceased to struggle with the disease, for he grows fat upon it. *Burney*. Perhaps, sir, that may be from want of exercise. *Johnson*. No, sir ; he has partly as much exercise as he used to have, for he digs in the garden. Indeed, before his confinement he used for exercise to walk to his ale-house ; but he was *carried* back again. I did not think he ought to be shut up. His infirmities were not noxious to society. He insisted on people praying with him ; and I'd as lief pray with Kit Smart as anyone else. Another charge was, that he did not love clean linen—and I have no passion for it.'

We must leave Johnson and Boswell, and turn to two other prose-writers—Hume and Burke—whose work we will examine in some detail, passing on from them to a more

* The degree of LL.D. was conferred on Johnson by Oxford in 1755.

rapid review of the remaining writers, to many of whom we would gladly give more space than is at our disposal.

Hume was the son of a small Scotch landed proprietor, and was born on his father's pretty estate of Nine-wells, Berwickshire. He seems to have had little school or college education, though he studied for a short time apparently at Edinburgh University. After futile attempts at law and commercial life,

David
Hume:
1711-1776.

'I went,' he says, 'over to France (1736) with a view of prosecuting my studies in a country retreat; and there I laid that plan of life which I have steadily and successfully pursued. I resolved to make a very rigid frugality, and supply my deficiency of fortune, to maintain unimpaired my own independency, and to regard every object as contemptible except the improvement of my talents in literature.'

In France Hume wrote his first work, 'A Treatise of Human Nature,' of which Books I. and II. ('Of the Understanding' and 'Of the Passions') appeared in 1739, while the third (and final) book—'On Morals'—followed in the next year. His 'Essays, Moral and Political' were published in 1741 and 1742, and from them we select a short specimen of his style in his philosophical writings:

'To balance a large state or society, whether monarchical or republican, on general laws, is a work of so great difficulty that no human genius, however comprehensive, is able by the mere dint of reason and reflection to effect it. The judgments of many must unite in this work; experience must guide their labour; time must bring it to perfection; and the feeling of inconveniencies must correct the mistakes which they inevitably fall into in their first trials and experiments. Hence appears the impossibility that this undertaking should be begun and carried on in any monarchy, since such a form of government, ere civilized, knows no other secret or policy than that of entrusting unlimited power to every governor or magistrate, and subdividing the people into so many classes and orders of slavery. From such a situation no improvement can ever be expected in the sciences, in the liberal arts, in laws, and scarcely in the manual arts and manufactures. The same barbarism and ignorance with which the government commences is propagated to all posterity, and can never come to a period by the efforts or ingenuity of such unhappy slaves.'

'His philosophical writings,' says Professor Minto, 'whatever may be their scientific value, have the merit of being clear and consistent. He was very painstaking with his composition. His manuscripts bear evidence of the most careful revision and fastidious choice of words and phrases. . . .

He offends chiefly by using terms peculiar to Scotch law. The great beauty of his style is its perspicuity. His choice of words is often very apt, and the combinations felicitous. The heavy character of his subjects is enlivened by a constant dry sparkle of antithesis, and occasional touches of quiet sarcasm and humour. He is highly eulogized by Dr. Nathan Drake: "The essays of Hume sometimes present the reader with the grace and sweetness of Addison; accompanied with a higher finishing and more accurate tact in the arrangement and structure of periods; so that no language is more clear and lively, more neat and chaste, more durably and delicately pleasing to the ear, than what may be produced from the best portions of those elaborate but very sceptical disquisitions."

In 1744 Hume's friends tried unsuccessfully to procure him a professorship at Edinburgh; next year he acted as tutor to a weak-minded young Scotch nobleman. From 1746 to 1748 he acted as secretary to General St. Clair in his expedition against L'Orient and his mission to Turin; in the latter year was published his 'Inquiry concerning the Human Understanding,' which was followed by his 'Inquiry concerning the Principles of Morals' and the 'Political Discourses' (1752). About this time he wrote his 'Dialogues on Natural Religion,' which were published posthumously.

In 1751 Hume settled at Edinburgh: his little inheritance was augmented by savings, and a small accession of income came to him from his appointment in 1752 as librarian to the Faculty of Advocates; this post, moreover, gave him the use of a fine collection of books, and it is probably due to this that the first volume of 'The History of Great Britain' was ready for publication in 1754; the whole work was finished in 1762, his 'Natural History of Religion' having appeared meanwhile (1757). Hume's History is the first specimen of that kind of writing—there are not yet a very large number—worthy to hold a high place as a literary work. 'It is sometimes compared,' says Professor Minto, 'with "The History of England" by Macaulay, who began where Hume left off, and who is said to have been ambitious of proving a worthy continuator of the elder historian. The style, though more abstract and much less spirited than

Macaulay's, and though the writer aimed at being "concise after the manner of the ancients," was brilliant and sparkling as compared with the ordinary historical performances of that or of prior date. There was also in the work a great feature of novelty. Hume was the first to mix with the history of public transactions accounts of the condition of the people, and of the state of arts and sciences. Although these supplementary chapters of his are very imperfect, and though he had neither materials for the task nor a just conception of the difficulty of it, still, the little that he gave was a pleasing innovation. Like Macaulay, he is accused of partiality in his explanation of events, but in the opposite direction.' The merits that have already been claimed for Hume's style are more strikingly displayed in the *History*, which, indeed, is probably his best work from a purely literary point of view. We quote a few lines from his description of the last days of Charles I.:

'It is confessed that the king's behaviour during this last scene of his life does honour to his memory, and that, in all appearances before his judges, he never forgot his part, either as a prince or as a man. Firm and intrepid, he maintained in each reply the utmost perspicuity and justness both of thought and expression; mild and equable, he rose into no passion at that unusual authority which was assumed over him. His soul, without effort or affectation, seemed only to remain in the situation familiar to it, and to look down with contempt on all the efforts of human malice and iniquity. The soldiers, instigated by their superiors, were brought, though with difficulty, to cry aloud for justice. "Poor souls!" said the king to one of his attendants; "for a little money they would do as much against their commanders." Some of them were permitted to go the utmost length of brutal insolence, and to spit in his face as he was conducted along the passage to the court. To excite a sentiment of piety was the only effect which this inhuman insult was able to produce upon him.'

In 1763 Hume went to France as secretary to the embassy; he received a pension for life and a large salary, and was made much of in French society. He acted for a time as Under Secretary of State in London, after which he returned to Edinburgh (1769), where he spent his closing years in prosperity and high honour. His last literary work—'My Own Life'—was written during the few months preceding his death in 1776.

Burke was the son of a Dublin solicitor; he was educated
L.

at Trinity College, Dublin (where he may have known his contemporary Goldsmith), and destined for the Edmund Burke: Bar. He came to London in 1750 to study for 1729-1797. that purpose, but though he kept his terms at the Temple he never became a barrister, giving up the law for literature. His devotion to the latter incensed his father, who in 1755 withdrew his allowance; accordingly Burke had to live by writing, and probably had to encounter as great difficulties therein as most of the men of that age whose sole support was their pen. In 1756 he married, and in the same year appeared his first works: 'A Vindication of Natural Society' and 'A Philosophical Inquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas on the Sublime and Beautiful.' The latter of these was probably written several years before its publication; it is an attempt at what we now call a 'psychological' theory of æsthetics, and as such is said not to have much value. 'But at least one signal merit remains to the "Inquiry": it was a vigorous enlargement of the principle, which Addison had not long before timidly illustrated, that critics of art seek its principles in the wrong place, so long as they limit their search to poems, pictures, engravings, statues and buildings, instead of first arranging the sentiments and faculties in man, to which art makes its appeal.'² The 'Vindication'³ was a satirical production written in Bolingbroke's manner and intended to be received as one of the works of that writer, whose literary remains had been but recently edited by Mallet (1754). Burke wished to show that the objections urged against revealed religion, which according to Bolingbroke and those who thought with him should induce men to give it up in favour of 'natural' religion, could be applied in a similar way to civilized or 'artificial' society as opposed to 'natural.' Hence Burke's ironical conclusion is that we must abandon artificial society. Many failed to see the irony, taking it seriously for Bolingbroke's work; many others would not have thought the conclusion a *reductio ad absurdum*, Rousseau having advocated

¹ It is not quite certain whether Burke was born in 1728 or 1729.

² John Morley.

³ Otherwise entitled 'A View of the Miseries and Evils arising to Mankind from every Species of Civil Society, in a Letter to Lord —, by a late Noble Writer.'

a similar theory in all good faith not long before. In 1759 Burke undertook to edit a yearly volume for a publisher, which was to be entitled 'The Annual Register,' and to give an account of the events of the past twelve months. It was about this time that Burke began to be familiar with politicians, one of whom—'Single-speech' Hamilton—took him to Ireland (1761) when he himself went there as secretary to the Lord-Lieutenant; a couple of years later Hamilton obtained for his friend a pension of £300 a year. Burke, however, quarrelled with Hamilton subsequently, and gave up his pension. He then acted as private secretary to Lord Rockingham during the latter's short ministry (1765-1766), and Burke's entry into Parliament dates from this time, a seat having been found for him at Wendover. The chief facts of his political career, as far as they bear upon his literary productions, must be briefly touched on. In 1769 Burke wrote his 'Observations on the Present State of the Nation' in answer to Grenville's attack on the Chatham ministry then in office; in this year, too, he purchased an estate at Beaconsfield (Buckinghamshire), the source of his wealth being never clearly ascertained. In 1770 appeared his pamphlet on 'The Cause of the Present Discontents.'

In 1771 Burke was made agent for New York, receiving £500 a year for his services; three years later he sat in Parliament for Bristol, the most important centre of the English trade with the American colonies. A little later he warmly opposed the harsh measures which were driving the colonies to revolt in his speeches on American taxation (1774), and on conciliation with America (1775), and in the letter to the Sheriffs of Bristol (1777).¹ In 1782 came the fall of North, and the brief ministry of Rockingham—in which his powerful supporter Burke had no cabinet office—which was terminated by its nominal chief's death three months after. The Whigs at once split into two sections, Shelburne, who headed one, coming into power, being before long displaced by the coalition of Fox and Burke and their section with Lord North. The coalition came to grief over the India Bill, which Burke eloquently

¹ 'Of all Burke's writings none are so fit to secure unqualified admiration as these three pieces.'—John Morley.

supported, and gave way to Pitt (1783). Connected with India is the next important event in Burke's life; on the return of Warren Hastings (1785), Burke immediately set to work to bring about his prosecution, caused him to be impeached, and took a leading part in the proceedings against him. The trial dragged on from 1788 to 1795, resulting in Hastings' acquittal. Before its termination public curiosity had long been exhausted, and public interest turned to affairs much closer to it than those of India, for France was illuminated or ablaze with the lights of the Revolution.

Cowper had rightly expressed the feelings of many of his countrymen when, in apostrophizing the Bastille, that 'house of bondage,' he had declared,

'There's not an English heart that would not leap
To hear that ye were fallen at last ;'

and Wordsworth, travelling to the Alps, on leaving Cambridge in 1790, declares that

'Europe at that time was thrilled with joy,
France standing on the top of golden hours,
And human nature seeming born again.'

So it seemed to some Englishmen, among whom were 'two clubs of gentlemen in London, called the Constitutional Society, and the Revolution Society,' who congratulated the French National Assembly on its actions. So it by no means seemed to Burke, who looked on the whole movement from the first with distrust and abhorrence, seeing in it only the outcome of the work of rationalistic writers and academic politicians whose issue was bound to be confusion and horror. 'I flatter myself,' he says in his 'Reflections on the Revolution in France'—

'I flatter myself that I love a manly, moral, regulated liberty as well as any gentleman of that [i.e., the Revolution] Society, be he who he will; and perhaps I have given as good proofs of my attachment to that cause in the whole course of my public conduct. I think I envy liberty as little as they do to any other nation; but I cannot stand forward and give praise or blame to anything which relates to human actions, and human concerns, on a simple view of the object as it stands, stripped of every relation, in all the nakedness and solitude of metaphysical abstraction. Circumstances (which with some gentlemen pass for nothing) give in reality to every political principle its distinguishing colour and discriminating effect. The circumstances are what render every civil and political scheme beneficial or noxious to mankind. Abstractedly speaking, government, as well as liberty, is good; yet

could I, in common-sense, ten years ago have felicitated France on her enjoyment of a government (for she then had a government) without inquiry what the nature of that government was or how it was administered? Can I now congratulate that same nation upon its freedom? Is it because liberty in the abstract may be classed amongst the blessings of mankind that I am seriously to felicitate a madman, who has escaped from the protecting restraint and wholesome darkness of his cell, on his restoration to the enjoyment of light and liberty? Am I to congratulate a highwayman and murderer who has broke prison upon the recovery of his natural rights? This would be to act over again the scene of the criminals condemned to the galleys, and their heroic deliverer, the metaphysic Knight of the Sorrowful Countenance.'

The 'Reflections' were published in 1791; they were read with avidity, and raised Burke to the height of popularity again. He followed them with a virulent 'Letter to a Member of the National Assembly,' and 'An Appeal from the New to the Old Whigs.' He urged the Government to make war with France, and he strenuously opposed any settlement in his 'Letters on a Regicide Peace.' In 1794 Burke retired from Parliament; a peerage would have been conferred on him, but with the death of his beloved son that year the matter dropped; he received very justly a large pension, however, and this was the cause of one of his last writings, viz., 'A Letter to a Noble Lord,' a fierce rejoinder to the Duke of Bedford, who had declaimed against Burke's pension.

We must now be much more brief in our survey of the remaining prose writers, many of whom, however, are of considerable importance. We turn back from Burke to glance at the chief historians; then at the philosophers, theologians and anti-theologians; and, finally, certain miscellaneous prose writers whom we have not yet studied.

Besides Hume's history, we have two or three remarkable works on the same subject (to say nothing of innumerable compilations) belonging to the latter half of the century.

Hume's countryman, Robertson, finished his 'History of Scotland' in 1759; ten years later he published his chief work, the 'History of the Reign of the Emperor Charles V.' Robertson also wrote a 'History of America' (1777). He was a learned man, and wrote clearly

Other
prose
writers.
William
Robertson:
1721-1793.

and carefully, though with considerable stiffness, using 'too long words and too many of them.' The historical master-

piece of the century is Gibbon's great work, 'The
Edward Gibbon: History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman
1737-1794. Empire': of this, the first volume appeared in 1776

the last being published twelve years later. Gibbon, after a little more than a year spent at Oxford in his youth, had become a convert to Roman Catholicism; he was, in consequence removed from the University and sent to live with a Protestant clergyman at Lausanne, where he became re-converted: that he had in after life no great love for any form of Christianity he makes evident in his writings. After some years spent abroad he returned home, and, having no profession, devoted himself to assiduous study. He determined to execute a work on some great historical subject, and finally settled on the decline of the Roman power. To the carrying out of his task he brought immense knowledge and unflagging energy, a cultivated imagination, and great intellectual ability. His style is glowing, his vocabulary very rich, for he formed a majestic manner of writing to suit the dignity of his matter; yet the charges brought against it of tawdriness and apparent artificiality are not without foundation. We quote but a few lines to give the student some idea of a manner of writing which before Gibbon was unknown in England:

'At the head of these veterans his son Nouredin gradually united the Mahometan powers, added the kingdom of Damascus to that of Aleppo, and waged a long and successful war against the Christians of Syria. He spread his ample reign from the Tigris to the Nile, and the Abbassides rewarded their faithful servant with all the titles and prerogatives of royalty. The Latins themselves were compelled to own the wisdom and courage, and even the justice and piety, of this implacable adversary. In his life and government the holy warrior revived the zeal and simplicity of the first caliphs. Gold and silk were banished from his palace, the use of wine from his dominions, the public revenue was scrupulously applied to the public service, and the frugal household of Nouredin was maintained from his legitimate share of the spoil, which he vested in the purchase of a private estate. His favourite Sultana sighed for some female object of expense. "Alas!" replied the King, "I fear God, and am no more than the treasurer of the Moslems. Their property I cannot alienate; but I still possess three shops in the city of Hems: these you may take, and these alone can I bestow." His chamber of justice was the terror of the great and the refuge of the poor. Some years after the Sultan's

death an oppressed subject called aloud in the streets of Damascus, "O Noureddin, Noureddin! where art thou now? Arise, arise, to pity and protect us!" A tumult was apprehended, and a living tyrant blushed or trembled at the name of a departed monarch.'

The knot of 'deistical,' or quasi-deistical, writers who begin to appear in Anne's reign—Tindal, Toland, Philo- sophers Collins, etc.—and their opponents need not detain theolo- gians, etc. us. Nor must we linger over Berkeley, whose chief work—'The Principles of Human Knowledge'—was done before the accession of George I., though he Berkeley, died late in George II.'s reign.¹ Butler's famous Bishop of Cloyne: 'Analogy'—its full title is 'The Analogy of Religion, Natural and Revealed, to the Constitution and Course of Nature'—which was published in 1736, was 1684—1753. designed to meet the arguments of the Deists, and 'Analogy' to maintain the logical basis of Christianity against them. Butler was born in 1692, and died in 1752, as Bishop of Durham; besides his 'Analogy'—which is written in an extremely involved and abstruse style²—he published some sermons.

The works of Hutcheson, Professor of Moral Philosophy in Glasgow, are still of importance to the student of Francis Hutcheson: ethics. The chief of them are his 'Inquiry into 1694-1747. the Ideas of Beauty and Virtue' (1725), and a posthumously published 'System of Moral Philosophy.' Dr Richard Price, the dissenting clergyman whose sympathy with the French Revolutionists so provoked Burke's 1723-1791. anger, published a 'Review of the Principal Questions and Difficulties in Morals' in 1758. The previous year had died Hartley, whose 'Observations on Man' (1749) David Hartley: is, says Professor Bain, 'the first systematic effort 1705-1757. to explain the phenomena of the mind by the law of association.' Adam Smith published in 1759 a 'Theory of the Moral Sentiments.' A more famous work of Adam Smith: his is 'The Wealth of Nations' (1776), which is 1723-1790. looked upon as the foundation of the science of

¹ His death occurred in 1753. In 1732 he published 'Alciphron, or the Minute Philosopher,' in which the views of the Deists are controverted: and in 1744 his 'Siris, a chain of Philosophical Reflections concerning the Virtues of Tar-water.'

² Paley, says a critic, may be said to have interpreted him to the multitude. William Paley (1743-1805) published his first notable work, 'A View of the Evidences of Christianity,' in 1794.

political economy. Reid, who succeeded Adam Smith as Professor of Philosophy at Glasgow, wrote 'An Inquiry into the Human Mind on the Principles of Common Sense' (1763), which was suggested by Hume's 'Treatise on Human Nature.' Among other works of his are a series of 'Essays on the Intellectual Powers of Man' (1785), and 'Essays on the Active Powers of the Mind.'

A few other prose-writers, each chiefly known for one work, remain to be dealt with. One of these is Miscellaneous prose writers. Lyttelton, who published his 'Dialogues of the Dead' in 1760. Lyttelton was a poet in a small way, a writer of history,¹ and the friend and patron of many men of letters—notably Fielding. The following Lord Lyttelton: 1709-1773. extract from one of his dialogues (Plutarch, Charon, and a Modern Bookseller) is a pleasant example of his style. Plutarch has been saying that 'it should be the first object of writers to correct the vices and follies of the age':

'*Bookseller.* We have had some English and French writers who aimed at what you suggest. In the supposed character of *Clariissa* (said a clergyman to me a few days before I left the world) one finds the dignity of heroism tempered by the meekness and humility of religion, a perfect purity of mind and sanctity of manners. In that of Sir Charles Grandison, a noble pattern of every private virtue, with sentiments so exalted as to render him equal to every public duty.

'*Plutarch.* Are both these characters by the same author?

'*Bookseller.* Ay, Master Plutarch; and, what will surprise you more, this author has printed for me.

'*Plutarch.* By what you say, it is a pity he should print any work but his own. Are there no other authors who write in this manner?

'*Bookseller.* Yes; we have another writer of these imaginary histories—one who has not long since descended to these regions. His name is Fielding, and his works, as I have heard the best judges say, have a true spirit of comedy and an exact representation of nature, with fine moral touches. He has not, indeed, given lessons of pure and consummate virtue, but he has exposed vice and meanness with all the powers of ridicule; and we have some other good wits who have exerted their talents to the purposes you approve. Monsieur de Marivaux, and some other French writers, have also proceeded much upon the same plan with a spirit and elegance which give their works no mean rank

* 'History of Henry II.' (1764). His other work of some interest is 'Letters from a Persian in England' (1785).

among the *belles lettres*. I will own that were there wit and entertainment enough in a book to make it sell, it is not the worse for good morals.

'*Charon*. I think, Plutarch, you have made this gentleman a little more humble, and now I will carry him the rest of his journey. . . .'

A writer whose identity has never been entirely settled was the author of a number of letters which began to appear in the *Public Advertiser* in 1769, with the signature of

'Junius.' 'Junius.' These letters are attacks on the ministers—notably the Duke of Grafton and Lord North—written with vigorous sarcasm, as well as with a close acquaintance with secrets of State, that seemed to show that the author was intimate with those he spoke of. Burke when accused of the authorship absolutely denied it. To Pitt, Lyttelton, Chesterfield, Wilkes, and many others the letters were also assigned; Sir Philip Francis,¹ however, is now generally looked upon as their writer.

Three works which should be mentioned before we leave this part of our subject are the 'Commentaries on the Laws of England' (1765, etc.), by Sir William Blackstone
 Blackstone. (1723-1780); the 'Natural History of Selborne'
 Gilbert (1789), by the Rev. Gilbert White (1720-1793);
 White. and 'An Essay on the Principles of Population'
 Malthus. (1798), by T. R. Malthus. Sir Joshua Reynolds
 Reynolds. (1723-1792) occupies a niche in literature with some Academy 'Discourses on Painting' (1778, etc.), and other essays on art.

¹ Philip Francis (1740-1818) was the son of an Irish clergyman dwelling in London, where he was intimate with many statesmen and wrote political papers. Philip entered the Civil Service at the age of sixteen, and was a chief clerk in the War Office when the 'Junius' letters were published. In 1778 he became a member of the Supreme Council in India, and was distinguished for his opposition to Warren Hastings.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

SURVEY OF THE YEARS 1798—1832 A.D.

It is as difficult as it is convenient to assign the particular year when one literary age may be said to close and another to begin, for there is always the voice of one or two forerunners crying the new age before its advent, and there are always stragglers, and sometimes great ones, who have fallen into the rear because they cannot or will not adapt themselves to altered conditions. The year 1660 by universal consent divides the Elizabethan or first 'romantic' period from that of the 'classics,' yet the best work of both Waller and Milton falls on the wrong sides of the dividing line. The 'classical' period may be said to have closed any time between 1780 and 1798. In the ninth decade of the eighteenth century 'classical' poetry may be seen, by a glance at the poetical calendar of that time, to have been slowly dying. But later than the year of the publication of the immortal 'Lyrical Ballads' (1798) of Wordsworth and Coleridge, the Magna Carta of the re-enfranchisement of English poetry, it is impossible, all will agree, to date the meeting and the severance of the two literary agēs. Thus our upward limit of date is fixed. The downward limit of 1832 is arrived at by several considerations. If controversy is still raging almost furiously¹ as to the comparative poetic estimate of the leaders of the second romantic school, it is clear that the final verdict of posterity cannot yet have been pronounced on their Victorian successors. The eighteenth century has been well called the 'saeculum rationalisticum,' the nineteenth century the 'saeculum realisticum.' But

¹ See Mr. Swinburne's essays in the *Nineteenth Century* of April and May, 1834, on Byron, Shelley, and Wordsworth.

sandwiched between the two centuries, if the expression may be permitted, there is an epoch or generation into which were crowded, first the excesses of the romantic reaction from classical excesses, and then that return to moderation and good sense which made possible a blending of classic and romantic characteristics in Victorian poetry. The year 1832, it is maintained, closes this epoch better than any other year. Scott, Crabbe and Bentham died in that year. Wordsworth had still eighteen years to live, Coleridge and Lamb two years, Southey eleven, Campbell twelve, Moore twenty, De Quincey twenty-seven, and Landor thirty-two; but the best work of all these men without exception was done. Of the writers who made the next generation famous in literature, Carlyle, Macaulay, Tennyson, Hood, Bulwer Lytton and Mrs. Browning had already published their earliest works; but all their writings of greatest moment fall after 1832.

This period of little more than thirty years is dwarfed or magnified according to the point of view. In the spring of 1864 Swinburne was sitting in Landor's lodging in Florence and listening to his recollection of having, when a boy at Rugby, made an excursion with a school-fellow to see Addison's daughter. That seems to bridge the gulf between the early eighteenth and the dying nineteenth century, and make thirty-five years appear almost as one day. But set over against it this fact: in 1798 Keats, Shelley and Byron were aged from three to ten years; in 1832 they had all been dead eight years or more: that makes thirty-five years appear almost as a thousand. Indeed, no other period in English literature, not even the Elizabethan, can vie with this in combined mass and rapidity of production; in splendour of literary achievement it is surpassed by the Elizabethan age alone. The mere enumeration of the writers of the first and second class is impressive: Wordsworth, Coleridge, Byron, Shelley, Keats, Scott, Landor, Campbell, Crabbe, Moore, Southey, Leigh Hunt, among the poets; Scott, Austen, Lamb, Hazlitt, Hallam, De Quincey, Cobbett, Wilson, among prose writers. Or take the productions of a single year: in 1816 Jane Austen's *Emma*, Byron's *Childe*

Harold' (canto iii), 'The Siege of Corinth,' and 'Prisoner of Chillon,' Coleridge's 'Christabel,' Leigh Hunt's 'Story of Rimini,' Scott's 'Antiquary,' 'Black Dwarf,' and 'Old Mortality,' Shelley's 'Alastor,' and Christopher North's 'City of the Plague,' first saw the light. With such an overwhelming output of work of a quality which it would be an insult to call respectable, the literary annalist's task of selection is obviously a difficult one. The only course that seems open to him through such a mass and such a maze is to follow out in this chapter the principal movements and lines of development in the literature of that day, and in the two remaining chapters to sketch the literary history of the most important poets and prosaists, rigidly excluding whatever is not of prime importance either in the historic estimate or through intrinsic excellence.

We have already had frequent occasion in the course of this history to use the terms 'romantic' and 'Classic' and 'classic' with special reference to schools and 'Romantic.' periods of literature, and in the 'Introductory' chapter on the years 1660 to 1700 the different characters of the versification of the two schools were expounded, because their metrical differences belong particularly to the seventeenth century. But the contrast is equally marked in diction and in subject-matter; and whereas, in versification, it was the classical school that protested against the method of the *earlier* romantic school which they contemned; in diction and subject-matter, on the other hand, the contrast is best drawn between the classical school and the *later* romantic school, because it was the latter that made the protest against the classical school on these two heads and enforced it in their works. The classical period had gone to the same extremes as its predecessor, only in the opposite direction; moreover, its sway was so prolonged that the following reaction, which was in the nature of things inevitable, had to go the extreme lengths of Wordsworth, Byron, and Shelley,¹ in order to make its protest sufficiently emphatic and to break, perhaps for ever, the swathing bands of convention and artificiality. Though this romantic

¹ "L'excès des défauts fait prévoir l'excès même de la réforme."—LEGOVIS.

reaction also went to extremes, its supremacy was not prolonged; hence it was possible for Tennyson, even in the next generation, to blend in his poetry what was permanent and best in the two schools, the order and harmony of the one with the profusion and diversity of the other, and so to render the antagonism of classic and romantic a thing of the past.

The history of Wordsworth and his poetry forms the best introduction to nineteenth century Romanticism; here we must forgo the advantage of that order and take Romanticism first, deferring, however, the question of 'poetic diction' which is inseparably connected with Wordsworth. We have seen throughout the century how the way was being prepared for the later romantics by Thomson, Collins, Gray, the Wartons, Percy, Chatterton, Cowper, Burns, Blake and others; yet Wordsworth was, alike by his claims and by the admission of friends and foes, the apostle of the movement. England generally was not converted until the apostles of the next age were beginning to preach or sing. Literary England, as represented by the critics and men of culture, was coming over to the new school with almost painful slowness throughout the whole of this period. But that is saying no more than that the apostles of the romantic movement shared the fate of all other apostles and real leaders of men. Not that much poetry and prose that must be called romantic—and what is there still living from that time that is not romantic?—was not eagerly and at once welcomed by the reading public; but that the most characteristic writings of the new school, their manifestoes, their tenets, won their way to acceptance slowly, and in spite of the critics. *How* slowly may be judged by the controversy as to the merits of Pope as a poet,¹—

* In editing a new edition of Pope in 1806, 'Bowles entirely mistook the functions of an editor, and maladroitly entangled his judgment of poetry with his estimate of the author's character. Thirteen years later, Campbell, in his "Specimens," controverted Mr. Bowles's estimate of Pope's character and position, both as man and poet. Mr. Bowles replied in a letter to Campbell on what he called "the invariable principles of poetry." This letter was in turn somewhat sharply criticised by Gilchrist in the *Quarterly Review*. Mr. Bowles made an angry and unmannerly retort, among other things charging Gilchrist with the crime of being a tradesman's son, whereupon the affair became what they call on

a controversy whose echoes have not yet died away. To us, looking back on this time, its production seems stamped from first to last with the romantic die; to the people of that time the romantic movement must have seemed, for at least two decades, like a ridiculous and hopeless rebellion against established authority, soon to be crushed out and forgotten.

'What, then was Romanticism?' Let Professor Herford, *the authority on the subject*, answer Romanticism! his own question. 'Primarily it was an extraordinary development of imaginative sensibility. At countless points the universe of sense and thought acquired a new potency of response and appeal to man, a new capacity of ministering to, and mingling with, his richest and intensest life. Glory of lake and mountain, grace of childhood, dignity of the untaught peasant, wonder of faery, mystery of the Gothic aisle, radiance of Attic marble—all these springs of the poet's inspiration and the artist's joy began to flow, not at once but in prolonged unordered succession; and not within a limited area, but throughout Western Europe, and pre-eminently in Germany, England, and France.

'The word Romance, hackneyed and vulgarised as it is, expresses less inadequately than any other the kind of charm which these heterogeneous sources of poetry exercised in common. They were all, to begin with, *strange* ways of escape from the pressure of the ordinary, modes of deliverance from the dead weight of routine. But the romance of which poetry is begotten can never be merely strange. It has a subtler fascination, which rests partly upon wonder, but partly also upon recognition. For its peculiar quality lies in this, that in apparently detaching us from the real world it seems to restore us to reality at a higher point—to emancipate us from the

the frontier a free fight, in which Gilchrist, Roscoe, the elder Disraeli, and Byron took part with equal relish, though with various fortune. The last shot, in what had grown into a thirty [twenty] years' war, between the partisans of what was called the Old School of poetry and those of the New, was fired by Bowles in 1826. Bowles, in losing his temper, lost also what little logic he had, and though, in a vague way, aesthetically right, contrived always to be argumentatively wrong,' (Lowell). Lowell's account does not err on the side of favouring Bowles unduly.

"prison of the actual," by giving us spiritual rights in a universe of the mind, exempt from the limitations of matter and time and space, but appealing at countless points to the instinct for that which endures and subsists. To rekindle the soul of the past, or to reveal a soul where no eye has yet discerned it; to call up Helen or Isolde, or to invest lake and mountain with "the light that never was, on sea or land"; to make the natural appear supernatural, as Wordsworth and Coleridge put it, or the supernatural natural—were but different avenues to the world of Romance. How was this world, thus disclosed by imagination, related to the world of the senses, the world of "common-sense," in which the mass of men contentedly moved? The current philosophy of the eighteenth century made short work of such questions. It reduced reality, in the last resort, to sense-impressions, and the "ideas" which reflected them. But the Romantic spirit, ardent, full of the zest of discovery, and striving to grasp the height and the depth of the new earth and new heaven which had swum into its ken, could tolerate no such answer. In every direction current beliefs and current institutions forced the Romantics to formulate their own ideals, with results which told sometimes for revolt and sometimes for reaction, sometimes for fierce intervention in affairs, sometimes for quiescent or scornful seclusion from them, but never, even in a Scott or a Keats, permitted complete unconcern. . .

'Like every other English version of a great European movement, English Romanticism had its peculiar originality and strength, and its peculiar limitations. Its chief glory lay, without doubt, in the extraordinarily various, intimate, and subtle interpretation of the world of "external Nature," and of that other world of wonder and romance which the familiar comradeship of Nature generates in the mind of man. Neither France nor Germany made any real advance upon Rousseau's vivid and impassioned landscape painting. But for Wordsworth, Shelley, Keats, and Coleridge, Nature is an inexhaustible source and provocation of lovely imaginings. Wordsworth conveys the loneliness of the mountains,

Shelley the tameless energies of wind, Keats the embalmed darkness of verdurous glooms and winding mossy ways, with an intensity which makes all other Nature poetry seem pale.¹

The same sound and accomplished critic has laid down the non-formal differences between the classical and romantic schools in such just and brilliant fashion that there is nothing for it but to quote him again. 'Classicism opposes to the arbitrariness of fancy a pervading rationality; to the mysterious the intelligible; to the unpruned variety of nature the limitations of an eclectic art; to passion glorified and dwelt on, passion restrained and somewhat disparaged. Romanticism, on the other hand, makes prominent the qualities conspicuous in the youth of a nation: bright aimless fancy, awe of the unknown, eager uncritical delight in the abundance of nature; impetuous joy and sorrow, breaking forth into such free and instant tears and smiles as the Argonauts uttered, or the comrades of Odysseus. In Classicism an age of understanding and refinement severely asserts its rights, and excludes whatever cannot be brought to its test: all that is obscure, redundant, or defective, too prominent or too unobtrusive for its part, or which suggests undignified or repellant associations. Unity of form is blended with eclecticism in subject; the

* Stendhal argued that all good art was romantic in its day. 'Romanticism is the art of presenting to people the literary works which, in the actual state of their habits and beliefs, are capable of giving them the greatest possible pleasure; classicism, on the contrary, of presenting them with that which gave the greatest possible pleasure to their grandfathers.' This is excellent—as a joke.

Before leaving the word *romantic* it is worth pointing out that the moving life-story of many of the authors of this period is 'romantic' in the non-literary and more common-place sense of the word. It has been claimed indeed that the story of our great writers is more romantic in this sense than that of any other nation. Certainly there is abundance of romance—and tragedy—in the lives of the foremost writers of 1798-1832. Did not one of them say:

'Most wretched men
Are cradled into poetry by wrong,
They learn in suffering what they teach in song'!

Who does not know the life and death romance of Keats and Shelley and Byron? 'Think too of the romance of the Great Romancer, a true Nemesis-drama in which the hero bears himself to the end with more than antique fortitude. Again, what character in all literature touches such an intimate chord of sympathy as Charles Lamb?'

taste of an exclusive age is seen in the choice of the latter, that of an intellectual age in the treatment of the former. Of these two elements the exclusiveness tends with the growth of a more catholic culture to diminish, while an enlarged understanding becomes capable of imposing a unity not less complete but only more complex upon more diverse matter. And thus the antagonism of the two movements tends to dissolve, the more permanent elements of each persisting, while the more transitory drop out. The wide outlook of Romanticism is accepted by a new generation which at the same time rejects its wilful eccentricities.'

The most widely recognised feature of the English Romanticism romantic movement is that often spoken of as and Politics. the 'Return to Nature,' which will be examined in connection with Wordsworth. Side by side with the return to Nature (with a capital N) in poetry, there was a movement initiated by Rousseau for a return to nature in social life, a movement of which the French Revolution was, in some degree at least, the outcome. It is curious to note that the poets of the early nineteenth century were drawn without exception into the romantic vortex, in some cases doubtless in spite of themselves, and to observe how they were severally affected by the political movement. In politics, Scott remained on the Conservative side throughout, Shelley and Byron (the latter with reservations) on the revolutionary side, while Keats was neutral; Wordsworth (Browning's 'Lost Leader'), Coleridge, and Southey passed over more or less from the revolutionary to the conservative side, Victor Hugo did exactly the opposite. How can the participation of all these men in the revolutionary movement in poetry be explained? Possibly because they all sought in the past relief from what they found intolerable in the present: in poetry, the revolutionaries sought relief from the no longer tolerable domination of Pope in the freedom of earlier and healthier models, a relief which the conservatives shared, if they did not seek it; in politics, the conservatives looked upon earlier ages as the golden days of monarchy and religion, while the revolutionaries may have believed

that they found their ideal of liberty, fraternity and equality in more primitive states of society.

The two
romantic
periods.

The points of similarity between the age of Spenser and Shakespeare and that of Wordsworth are sufficiently numerous and important, especially when they are contrasted with the intervening classical period, to justify the application to them of the common epithet 'romantic.' This term was first applied to what has often since been called the *Second Romantic Movement*. But this was seen to be, both in its intentions and in its results, very largely in the nature of a *return* to the earlier paths of English poetry, so that the term was extended to the somewhat similar earlier movement in Elizabethan times. The degree of similarity to be found between the two ages will greatly depend, as has just been implied, on whether we contrast them jointly with the age that divided them, or compare them with each other. In the latter case we shall find in them features markedly dissimilar. This dissimilarity is partly represented by the contrast between the drama and the novel: that was the age of the drama, this is the age of the novel; that was the age of action, this is the age of introspection. True, the poetry of the age of Wordsworth is more noteworthy and characteristic than its fiction, but that detracts little if anything from the force of the illustration. For the salient fact is this: the Elizabethans came into a rich heritage of *life*, which they had to investigate and explore and make their own; their world was a world of action, and therefore their literature is before all things a literature of action; they did not often pause to reflect or analyse or balance pros and cons, they acted by impulse or by intuition. On the other hand, their descendants of the early nineteenth century were necessarily much more self-conscious, critical, introspective; they were keenly alive to the literary history of the intervening centuries, which they regarded with sympathy, or aversion, or an alternation of the two; the problems of life lay heavy upon some or all of them, not least probably upon those in whose works they seem to have left the fewest traces. Lastly, the age of Wordsworth regarded

external Nature in a way unknown to the Elizabethans, who, apart from Shakespeare, were unable even to assign the flowers to their seasons.

The remainder of this chapter will be devoted to a more or less disconnected survey of those features and movements in the literature of 1798—1832 A.D. which are not indissolubly associated with the name of any particular

author. And first, a word is due to the place of Ballads. ballads among 'romantic' influences. Wordsworth is hardly chargeable with exaggeration when he wrote of Percy's 'Reliques' (1765) in 1815: 'For our own country, its poetry has been absolutely redeemed by it. I do not think that there is an able writer in verse of the present day who would not be proud to acknowledge his obligations to the 'Reliques'; I know that it is so with my friends; and, for myself, I am happy in this occasion to make a public avowal of my own.' Of the same work Scott wrote: 'nor do I believe I ever read a book half so frequently or with half the enthusiasm.' In spite of the ridicule of Johnson and Goldsmith, in spite of the greater though more ephemeral success of Macpherson's 'Ossian,' the genuineness of which is still under discussion, Percy's work, and ballad literature generally, came gradually but surely into wider and wider recognition, as the bibliography in Prof. Child's 'Ballads' amply testifies. Before Percy only one important collection of ballads had appeared; now their position as a branch of literature is proved secure by the abiding estimation in which they are held and by the reverence with which the text is treated. The significant fact for our period is that ballads are the productions of early periods and nameless minstrels, belonging as it were to the childhood of literature, and hence they are the very antithesis of the classic eighteenth century, which in fact tried its hardest to despise and neglect them.

Here, as well as anywhere, one word must be said about 'The Lake the 'Lake School.' If any one now chooses to refer to Wordsworth, Coleridge and Southey as the 'Lakists,' it would probably be understood whom he meant. It was the fashion of the critics of the *Edinburgh*

Review to regard Wordsworth as the leader of what they were pleased to call the '*Lake School*,' because he, Coleridge, and Southey were supposed to have formed a 'brotherhood of poets,' who 'haunted for some years about the lakes of Cumberland.' This was good enough for contemporary satirists, one of whom suggested that

'They lived in the Lakes—an appropriate quarter
For poems diluted with plenty of water.'

But criticism no longer needs Coleridge's distinct denial that any such 'school' existed; the three men were friends—Coleridge and Southey married sisters—and influenced each other; but it may well be doubted if there are greater resemblances between them than between any other three romantics.

With the name of Coleridge we first associate the growing influence of Germany upon English thought and literature, which was, however, slow in making itself felt. Scott had published translations from Bürger (Percy's influence working *via* Germany), and Goethe before the close of the eighteenth century. Coleridge made a powerful version of Schiller's '*Wallenstein*,' and came under the spell of Kant's transcendental philosophy. Carlyle—probably of all English writers the most in sympathy with the German mind—translated Goethe's '*Wilhelm Meister*' in 1824, published a '*Life of Schiller*' in 1825, and a volume of specimens of German Romances in 1827. The writers in '*Maga*' (*Blackwood's Magazine*, started in 1817), to which De Quincey contributed German Prose Classics in 1826-7, carried on the work thus begun. It was not until the third decade of the nineteenth century that the interest in German literature rapidly quickened and we became more familiar with the thinkers of Germany than with those of France. Outside of criticism, in which Coleridge first taught us to understand German methods, and apart from a brief 'rage' for Kotzebue in drama, it is chiefly in philosophy, theology and philology that the speculation and teaching of Germany have been very conspicuous, and these very departments were among the last to feel the general intellectual revival.

Early nineteenth century prose is especially noteworthy in the realms of criticism and fiction. Its criticism was of course not all in prose. Byron's 'English Bards and Scotch Reviewers' says some very trenchant things about several of his contemporaries; Keats in his 'Sleep and Poetry' accuses his poetical predecessors of having

'sway'd about upon a rocking-horse,
And thought it Pegasus,

thus expressing the romantic poet's uncompromising opinion of the classical school. The *Anti-Jacobin*, started in 1797, and the 'Rejected Addresses' (1812) of James and Horace Smith, contained the criticism of parody and burlesque on the poetry of the day, especially that of the new school. Worthy of particular mention in the former are the contributions of Canning; among them, the 'Rovers,' a burlesque of Schiller's 'Räuber,' in which he was assisted by Hookham, Frere, and Ellis, and 'The Friend of Humanity and the Knife-Grinder.'

More important in the history of literature was the starting of the great reviews, which formulated critical opinion along particular lines, in one case more, in another less, conservative, which played a prominent part throughout the century, and have only fallen into comparative neglect in a *fin de siècle* which demands everything in small gobbets. In 1802 the *Edinburgh Review* was founded by Jeffrey, Brougham, and Sydney Smith; after the first few numbers Jeffrey became editor in chief and held that position until 1829. Brougham wrote the notice of Byron's 'Hours of Idleness,' which resulted in the latter's 'English Bards and Scotch Reviewers'; Jeffrey's review of Moore led to a duel between the poet and the critic; and it was the editor's critique of Wordsworth's 'Excursion' (1814) that opened with the famous 'This will never do.' But Jeffrey lived to apologise for his treatment of Wordsworth. The discontent of Scott and others with the tone of the *Edinburgh* led to the establishment of the *Quarterly Review* in 1809, of which William Gifford was editor until 1824, when he was

succeeded by Scott's son-in-law and biographer, John Gibson Lockhart. *Maga* followed in 1817.

Most important of all in this department was the rise of the 'great school' of Shakesperian critics in ^{The} 'great school' Coleridge, Lamb, and Hazlitt. They may have ^{of critics.} owed something to Germany; but there was in their work an insight, a brilliance, an eclecticism, an unerring justness of appreciation, that we too seldom have cause to associate with German industry and thoroughness. The eighteenth century can show plenty of Shakesperian editors and emendators; it has not a single critic of the calibre of these three men, who alone would suffice to make the prose of any period famous. Hazlitt was probably 'the greatest of English critics of literature,' and his position seems all the more exalted when his work is contrasted, in style and acumen, with much of what passes for criticism now-a-days. Coleridge is not a great prose stylist, but he is still our finest Shakesperian critic; if we had to recommend one book as the *vade-mecum* of the student of the plays of Shakespeare, we should unhesitatingly select his 'Lectures and Notes on Shakespeare.' To the prose of Lamb we intend to return.

Even more momentous were the startling developments in fiction in these years. The first great period of English fiction opened with Richardson's 'Pamela' in 1740, and closed with Smollett's 'Humphrey Clinker' in 1771. Horace Walpole's 'Castle of Otranto,' the unwitting parent of the 'novel of terror,' had appeared in 1764, Goldsmith's 'Vicar of Wakefield' in 1766, Sterne's 'Sentimental Journey' in 1768, and Mackenzie's 'Man of Feeling' in 1771. The second great period opened with Scott's 'Waverley' in 1814 and closed with his death in 1832. Between the two periods lies an expanse of some forty-three years, varied only by an occasional comet such as Miss Burney's 'Evelina' (1778) or Beckford's 'Vathek' (1784). In the last decade of the eighteenth century came the 'reign of terror' in fiction as in France; it may be represented here by Mrs. Radcliffe's 'Mysteries of Udolpho' (1794) and Lewis's 'Monk' (1795), and, with the substitution of natural for supernatural terror, by Godwin's masterpiece,

'Caleb Williams' (1794).¹ Scott says with reference to his immediate predecessors in fiction: 'The imitators of
 Before Mrs. Radcliffe and Mr. Lewis were before us;
 1814. personages who, to all the faults and extravagances of their originals, added that of dulness, with which they can seldom be charged. We strolled through a variety of castles, each of which was regularly called Il Castello; met with as many captains of condottieri; heard various ejaculations of S. Maria and Diabolo; read by a decaying lamp and in a tapestried chamber dozens of legends as stupid as the main history; examined such suites of deserted apartments as might fit up a reasonable barrack; and saw as many glimmering lights as would make a respectable illumination.' But, beside these mediocrities and nonentities, there were two ladies in the early years of the century who pointed out to Scott, if they did nothing more, the two main lines on which his fiction was to be drawn, those of history and Scottish character. Miss Edgeworth's first published novel, 'Castle Rackrent,' appeared in 1800, and Scott himself acknowledges amply his indebtedness to her in the way of the suggestion to do for Scotland what she had done for Ireland. Miss Jane Porter was the daughter of the surgeon to the Enniskillen Dragoons, and seems to have inherited a passion for the romance of war. Her 'Thaddeus of Warsaw' (1803) and 'Scottish Chiefs' (1810) united for the first time all the essential elements of the modern historical novel, without containing one of the higher qualities of local or temporal colour, a correct picture of national manners or representation of the condition of the times, heroes drawn from real life, variety in character, or tolerable dialogue. Yet that she pointed out the road which the historical novel was to follow and led the way herself, cannot for one moment be doubted. It is stated as a known fact that Sir Walter Scott admitted to George IV. one day in the library at Carlton Palace, that the 'Scottish Chiefs' was the parent in his mind of the Waverley novels.² Such a

¹ Mary Shelley's 'Frankenstein' (1817) is a powerful, if belated, example of the same school.

² See *Annual Register*, 1850.

generous acknowledgment as this makes it the more necessary to add that, from our standpoint, such works as Sophia Lee's 'Recess' (1785) and Jane Porter's novels are historical only in name. It is obvious that what is called 'historical fiction' may range from the purely fanciful treatment of historical *names* to historical truth in incident, character, and colouring. The most superficial comparison of Scott with his predecessors will show that through his treatment of historical characters and movements he created an entirely new species of fiction. With Scott, thus shown to be the creator of the historical novel, and Jane Austen, the creator of the domestic novel of character, we deal more fully in the chapter on 'Prose.'

It is marvellous testimony to the greatness of Scott and ^{After} Miss Austen, that though they were pioneers in the ^{1814.} historical and the domestic novel respectively, they both reached almost the highest degree of success in their respective spheres. Men of great talent could hardly be content to follow an already well-beaten track: accordingly, Lockhart struck out a line for himself in his classical novel 'Valerius' (1824), Thomas Hope did the same in his picaresque novel of Eastern travel, 'Anastasius' (1819), James Morier achieved a greater and lasting success in his novel of Persian life, 'Hajji Baba' (1824), while Thomas Love Peacock wrote some novels of the 'fantastic-satirical order'—'Crotchet Castle' (1831) is as good an example as any—that are unique in English fiction. The imitators and followers of Scott and Miss Austen were more numerous and necessarily less important. Galt and Wilson ('Christopher North') are the most distinguished followers of Scott in the novel of Scottish life and character, Miss Ferrier and Miss Mitford of Miss Austen in the domestic, family, or social novel. Scott's followers usually went too far and exaggerated his faults, especially in the imitation of *obligato* characters, such as dwarfs, jesters, gipsies, which they carried to the point of caricature, just as they also overloaded their tales with minute descriptions of costume and scenery, which are at times somewhat wearisome even in the master.

The drama of this period can find no place in these

chapters beyond this paragraph because of its comparative insignificance. The 'academic' drama of this time is far greater than the acting drama, for it includes such masterpieces as Shelley's 'Cenci,' 'Prometheus Unbound,' and 'Hellas' (the last two belonging to the small class of English 'Greek' plays); while on a lower level are his satiric 'Œdipus Tyrannus, or Swell-foot the Tyrant,' Landor's 'Count Julian' (1812), and Byron's 'Manfred,' a dramatic poem, 'Sardanapalus,' 'Marino Faliero,' 'Werner,' 'The Deformed Transformed,' and the mysteries, 'Cain' and 'Heaven and Earth.' All these belong to poetry rather than to the drama. Of Joanna Baillie's 'Plays on the Passions' (1798—1836), only one was ever produced on the stage. On the contrary, among the plays of Sheridan Knowles, the first and almost only literary 'dramatist' of the period, 'Virginus' (1820), 'The Hunchback' (1832), and 'The Wife' (1833) still hold the boards.

* Under this term we include those plays which, whether written with a view to being acted or not, are for one reason or another hardly ever acted, and belong more strictly to the purely poetical, rather than to the dramatic, division of literature.

include the following poems: 'Lines composed above Tintern Abbey' (1798),¹ 'The Sparrow's Nest' (1801), 'My heart leaps up' (1802), 'Stanzas written in my Pocket-copy of Thomson's "Castle of Indolence"' (1802), 'The Solitary Reaper' (1803), 'To the Cuckoo' (1804), 'I wandered lonely as a cloud' (1804), 'The Affliction of Margaret' (1804), 'Ode to Duty' (1805), 'Stanzas suggested by a Picture of Peele Castle' (1805), 'Character of the Happy Warrior' (1806), 'Intimations of Immortality from Recollections of Early Childhood' (1803-6), 'Song at the Feast of Brougham Castle' (1807), 'Extempore Effusion upon the Death of James Hogg' (1835), and the pick of the

Sonnets.

'Sonnets.' As a sonneteer, Wordsworth's merits are simply remarkable. The sonnet had been neglected for a century, revived by Thomas Warton, and cultivated by Bowles, who inspired Coleridge (but not to write sonnets). But that the poet of 'The Idiot Boy' should be the one to bring the sonnet back to its pristine perfection and to popular favour is one of those things one would never be likely to prophesy. Yet the best sonnets of Wordsworth are worthy of Shakespeare or Milton, unsurpassable, perfect, equalled only by 'Let me not to the marriage of true minds' and its few compeers. If 'The world is too much with us' is the best, 'Westminster Bridge' runs it very close, and is given here as being the less well known.

'Earth has not anything to show more fair;
 Dull would he be of soul who could pass by
 A sight so touching in its majesty:
 This city now doth, like a garment, wear
 The beauty of the morning; silent, bare,
 Ships, towers, domes, theatres, and temples lie
 Open unto the fields and to the sky,
 And bright and glittering in the smokeless air.
 Never did sun more beautifully steep
 In his first splendour valley, rock, or hill;
 Ne'er saw I, never felt, a calm so deep!
 The river glideth at his own sweet will:
 Dear God! the very houses seem asleep;
 And all that mighty heart is lying still!'

There can be no doubt that Wordsworth found the

¹ In the case of Wordsworth only, the dates given are those of composition, not publication.

discipline of sonnet-writing helpful and beneficial; indeed he says so himself in 'Nuns fret not,' as plainly as words can say it:

'In truth the prison, unto which we doom
Ourselves, no prison is: and hence for me,
In sundry moods, 'twas pastime to be bound
Within the Sonnet's scanty plot of ground;
Pleased if some Souls (for such there needs must be),
Who have felt the weight of too much liberty,
Should find brief solace there, as I have found.'

Of the best poems mentioned above, the 'Lines Written above Tintern' alone appeared in the 'Lyrical Ballads' (1798). The importance of this work has been already insisted on; in the Prefaces and Appendix of the later editions Wordsworth promulgated and defended the poetic theories which he had exemplified in the body of the work. The 'Lyrical Ballads' therefore are to modern poetry what Rossetti's 'Annunciation' is to modern painting; they 'enriched the world of English poetry as no one volume has since done.' The story of the early association of the joint authors of this work is probably the most important passage in both their lives, and, often as it has been told, must be re-told here. If we go back a few years, Coleridge (1772—1834) was lying on the roof of Christ's Hospital, dreaming away his time, while Wordsworth was up at St. John's College, Cambridge, a youth of seventeen, in total isolation of the higher kind. Coleridge came up in his nineteenth year to Jesus College; but, though they were in Cambridge for a short time together, they seem to have heard nothing of each other. In 1789, the 'Sonnets' of William Lisle Bowles had been published; in 1791 a copy was placed in Coleridge's hand, and had the effect of starting him on his poetical career. He is said to have made forty copies of the book with his own hand. What Coleridge wrote at Cambridge was worthless, without a trace of the genius of his later work. On the other hand, although only one poem of Wordsworth's, 'An Evening Walk,' bears the Cambridge stamp, that one is not unworthy in some respects of the place or of the future fame of the poet. From 1789, Wordsworth was occupied for a

time with the French Revolution, which, night after night, he says, distracted him like a nightmare. In 1793, Coleridge gets a little book of Wordsworth's, 'Descriptive Sketches,' and is instantly and violently moved by it. He writes immediately, in his impulsive manner, to all his friends: 'The giant Wordsworth—God love him!' In 1795-6, when they became intimate, each felt that their friendship was by far the most important thing that had ever happened to them. In 1797, Wordsworth and his sister removed to Alfoxden, in Somersetshire, on purpose to be near Coleridge. It is not too much to say that the first personal intercourse between the two men raised Coleridge from a fourth-rate poet to one of the first order, and in fact he wrote nearly everything of his that has qualities of enduring worth within two years or so from the beginning of their friendship. Coleridge's influence on Wordsworth, though less immediately momentous, was of great value; for one thing it helped to rid him of those morbid ideas which had come from brooding over the French Revolution.

The outcome of their sojourn together on the Quantocks was the 'Lyrical Ballads,' for which the generous
The Lyrical Ballads, Cottle of Bristol gave thirty guineas, although in a few years, when disposing of his business, he handed over the copyright to the purchaser as worthless. Wordsworth refers to the joint authorship in the 'Prelude':

'That summer, under whose indulgent skies
 Upon smooth Quantock's airy ridge we roved
 Unchecked, or loitered mid her sylvan combs,
 Thou in bewitching words, with happy heart,
 Didst chaunt the vision of that Ancient Man,
 The bright-eyed Mariner;
 And I, associate with such labour, steeped
 In soft forgetfulness the livelong hours,
 Murmuring of him who, joyous hap, was found,
 After the perils of his moonlight ride,
 Near the loud waterfall.'

Coleridge has left us a more detailed account in prose:¹

¹ This quotation will save the necessity of illustrating Coleridge's prose style in the next chapter.

'During the first year that Mr. Wordsworth and I were neighbours, our conversations turned frequently on the two cardinal points of poetry, the power of exciting the sympathy of the reader by a faithful adherence to the truth of nature, and the power of giving the interest of novelty by the modifying colours of imagination. The thought suggested itself (to which of us I do not recollect) that a series of poems might be composed of two sorts. In the one, the incidents and agents were to be, in part at least, supernatural; and the excellence aimed at was to consist in the interesting of the affections by the dramatic truth of such emotions, as would naturally accompany such situations, supposing them real. For the second class, subjects were to be chosen from ordinary life; the characters and incidents were to be such as will be found in every village and its vicinity where there is a meditative and feeling mind to seek after them, or to notice them when they present themselves. In this idea originated the plan of the 'Lyrical Ballads'; in which it was agreed that my endeavours should be directed to persons and characters supernatural, or at least romantic; yet so as to transfer from our inward nature a human interest and a semblance of truth sufficient to procure for these shadows of imagination that willing suspension of disbelief for the moment, which constitutes poetic faith. Mr. Wordsworth, on the other hand, was to propose to himself as his object, to give the charm of novelty to things of every day, and to excite a feeling analogous to the supernatural, by awakening the mind's attention from the lethargy of custom, and directing it to the loveliness and the wonders of the world before us. With this view I wrote the 'Ancient Mariner,' and was preparing, among other poems, the 'Dark Ladie,' and the 'Christabel,' in which I should have more nearly realised my ideal than I had done in my first attempt. But Mr. Wordsworth's industry had proved so much more successful, and the number of his poems so much greater, that my compositions, instead of forming a balance, appeared rather an interpolation of heterogeneous matter. In this form the 'Lyrical Ballads' were published. . . . To the second edition he added a preface of considerable length, in which he was

understood to contend for the extension of this style to poetry of all kinds, and to reject as vicious and indefensible all phrases and forms of style that were not included in what he (unfortunately, I think, adopting an equivocal expression) called the language of real life.'

The importance of the above passage left us no option as to whether to quote it or not. Whoever would understand this period should study it carefully, for it is the second romantic movement in little. In the famous Preface of

Poetic 1800 (and the Appendix of 1802) Wordsworth
Diction. promulgated his peculiar theories of poetry and poetic diction; the controversy which they raised is not yet closed.¹ 'Poetry is the breath and finer spirit of all knowledge; it is the impassioned expression which is in the countenance of all Science.' In this strain Wordsworth commands universal assent, and shows us what fine prose he can write. 'The first volume of these poems ['Lyrical Ballads,' 1798] was published as an experiment, which, I hoped, might be of some use to ascertain how far, by fitting to metrical arrangement a selection of the real language of men in a state of vivid sensation, that sort of pleasure and that quantity of pleasure may be imparted which a poet may rationally endeavour to impart. . . The reader will find that personifications of abstract ideas rarely occur in these volumes; and are utterly rejected, as an ordinary device to elevate the style, and raise it above prose. My purpose was to imitate, and, as far as possible, to adopt the very language of men; and assuredly such personifications do not make any natural or regular part of that language. . . There will also be found in these volumes little of what is usually called poetic diction. . . I have at all times endeavoured to look steadily at my subject; consequently, there is, I hope, in these Poems little falsehood of description, and my ideas are expressed in language fitted to their respective importance. . . This practice has necessarily cut me off from a large portion of phrases and figures of speech which from father to son have long been

¹ It occupies a considerable portion of the Introduction to a centenary (1899) reprint of the 'Lyrical Ballads.'

regarded as the common inheritance of Poets. . . It may be safely affirmed, that there neither is, nor can be, any *essential* difference between the language of prose and metrical composition.' Here indeed Wordsworth threw down the gauntlet, which others were not slow to take up. In parts, we may admit, he misstated and overstated his own case. 'What then did he mean?' asks Coleridge. 'I apprehend,' he replies, 'that, in the clear perception, not unaccompanied with disgust or contempt, of the gaudy affectations of a style that passed current with too many for poetic diction (though, in truth, it had as little pretensions to poetry as to logic or common sense), he narrowed his view for the time; and feeling a justifiable preference for the language of nature and of good sense, even in its humblest and least ornamented forms, he suffered himself to express, in terms at once too large and too exclusive, his predilection for a style the most remote possible from the false and showy splendour which he wished to explode.'¹

However far Wordsworth was right or wrong on particular points, several great claims made on his ^{Some of} Wordsworth's behalf must be admitted; he 'took stock' of ^{reforms.} the language of poetry, cleared out a lot of old rubbish which had long ceased to have any but a conventional poetic value, and made available for poetic use many words that had long been falsely regarded as unpoetic. And this is only symbolical of what he achieved in other departments; he extended likewise the domain of poetry in the realm of nature, not external nature alone, but in the lower ranks of human nature too. The eighteenth century had clung to the surface of things like a limpet, never penetrating beneath; Wordsworth habitually worked from the surface towards the centre, and to this characteristic all his reforms are traceable. As one of his disciples says, Through seeing in many things which had hitherto been deemed unfit subjects for poetry a deeper truth and beauty than in those which had been most dealt with, he did a wider service to poetry than any other poet of his time.

¹ The reader is referred to Wordsworth's Preface and Appendix, and to Coleridge's criticism of them in his 'Biographia Literaria,' Chapter xiv, *seqq.*

There is another debt that we owe to him. We turn to other poets for amusement, for intellectual stimulation, for cultivation of the aesthetic emotions; we turn to Wordsworth for moral and spiritual consolation. He speaks direct to the soul. Not that he is by any means a distinctly religious poet. His artistic canon is expressed in these words: 'his works, as well as those of other poets, should not be considered as developing all the influences which his own heart recognised, but rather those which he felt able as an artist to display to advantage.' And these were, above all, the influences of Nature. He is the high priest of our restored communion with Nature. To Milton, who knew nature chiefly through books, she was a glorious spectacle, to Wordsworth she was a living power. Milton's epithets are expressive 'of a real emotion in the spectator's soul, not of any quality detected by keen insight in the objects themselves.' This insight was the secret of Wordsworth's strength. 'Most eighteenth-century poets in like manner either content themselves with the mere description of single scenes in Nature, or they transfer to these scenes their own emotions. It is Wordsworth who first thinks of Nature habitually as a whole, and treats of the active influence which she may exert on the mind of man. It is not every one, however, as he says, who is capable of receiving all that nature is ready to give. It is useless to approach her except with observing eyes and an open heart. The accuracy of Wordsworth's own observation of Nature is proved to us on all hands in his poems, and his sensitiveness of feeling is well shown in the 'Lines composed above Tintern Abbey.' But to get the utmost good possible, he tells us a further process is necessary, a withdrawal into oneself and an inward contemplation of what one has seen and felt. It is the picture left on the mind after this process which is the last lesson Nature can give us, and which is the fit subject of poetry. Often the emotion originally excited will be completely transmuted in this process of inward reflection: sadness may be made the substance of a higher joy.' Thus we see that Nature in Wordsworth's poetry is not regarded as a mere background

for his pictures of man, nor as a mirror reflecting the feelings of man, but rather as a wonderful power around us calming and influencing our souls.

Exaggerated claims have been put forward on behalf of Wordsworth's influence on English poetry, and on the other hand these claims have been wholly denied. His best work was written between the years 1797 and 1808, and the best of his best is supreme in its kind. It is intermingled with a good deal that, whether or not as a consequence of his theories, is comparatively of very poor quality. Sometimes the two qualities are most strangely blended in the same poem, as in 'The Sailor's Mother.' Coleridge (in the work to which we have already referred the reader) lays down the characteristic blemishes and defects of his friend's poetry. The blemishes he finds in it are: first, the inconstancy of the style, the sudden transitions from lines of peculiar felicity to a style not only unimpassioned but undistinguished; second, a matter-of-factness, or laborious minuteness and circumstantiality in certain poems; third, an undue predilection for the dramatic form in certain poems; fourth, occasional prolixity, repetition, and an eddying instead of progression of thought; last, thoughts and images too great for the subject. On the other hand, he enumerates the following excellences: first, a perfect appropriateness of words to meaning, and a frequent *curiosa felicitas* of diction; second, a freshness of thought and sentiment, and perfect truth to nature in his images and descriptions; third, a union of deep and subtle thought with sensibility; the sympathy of a contemplator from whose view no difference of rank conceals the sameness of the nature, no injuries of wind or weather, of toil or even of ignorance, wholly disguise the human face divine; last, a pre-eminence of imaginative power.

The personality of Wordsworth has been, as it were, rehabilitated in recent years through the labours of a French scholar, M. Émile Legouis.¹

¹ 'The Early Life of William Wordsworth, 1770-1798. A Study of "The Prelude."' (Dent, 7s. 6d. net)

He has shown that the popular conception of the poet as a prim, staid, if not stolid, Puritan, as a self-absorbed, uninteresting recluse, as characterised by a calm, passionless aloofness from the world of human interests, is a total *misconception*. M. Legouis proves conclusively that up to 1798 Wordsworth was the antithesis of all this. And if he changed much in later years, he did not change to the very opposite of what he had been before. The very massiveness of his character has misled some critics. As Dowden finely says, 'Instead of transforming his being, as did Shelley, into a single energy, all diverse energies blended in Wordsworth's nature into a harmonious whole. The senses were informed by the soul, and became spiritual; passion was conjoined with reason and with conscience; knowledge was vivified by emotion; a calm passivity was united with a creative energy; peace and excitation were harmonised; and over all brooded the imagination. Wordsworth is never intense for the very reason that he is spiritually massive. The state which results from such consentaneous action of diverse faculties is one not of pure passion, not of pure thought; it is one of impassioned contemplation. To those who are strangers to this state of impassioned contemplation, Wordsworth's poetry, or all that is highest in it, is as a sealed book.'

We have already sampled the 'Sonnets.' The best of the other poems are too long or too hackneyed to give here, and we therefore quote the latter part of the Spenserian 'Stanzas written in Thomson's "Castle of Indolence"'; the opening stanzas describe Wordsworth himself, these give us Coleridge.

'With him there often walked in friendly guise,
Or lay upon the moss by brook or tree,
A noticeable Man with large gray eyes,
And a pale face that seemed undoubtedly
As if a blooming face it ought to be;
Heavy his low-hung lip did oft appear,
Deprest by weight of musing Phantasy;
Profound his forehead was, though not severe;
Yet some did think that he had little business here:

'Sweet heaven forbend! his was a lawful right,
Noisy he was, and gamesome as a boy;

His limbs would toss about him with delight
 Like branches when strong winds the trees annoy.
 Nor lacked his calmer hours device or toy
 To banish listlessness and irksome care;
 He would have taught you how you might employ
 Yourself; and many did to him repair,—
 And certes not in vain; he had inventions rare.

*Expedients, too, of simplest sort he tried:
 Long blades of grass, plucked round him as he lay,
 Made, to his ear attentively applied,
 A pipe on which the wind would deftly play;
 Glasses he had, that little things display,
 The beetle panoplied in gems and gold,
 A mailed angel on a battle-day;
 The mysteries that cups of flowers enfold,
 And all the gorgeous sights which fairies do behold.

*He would entice that other Man to hear
 His music, and to view his imagery:
 And, sooth, these two were each to the other dear:
 No livelier love in such a place could be:
 There did they dwell—from earthly labour free,
 As happy spirits as were ever seen;
 If but a bird, to keep them company,
 Or butterfly sate down, they were, I ween,
 As pleased as if the same had been a Maiden-queen.'

We have already seen something of Samuel Taylor Coleridge in connection with the 'Lyrical Ballads,' and have noted that his allotted part was, in a word, to obtain a 'willing suspension of disbelief' for the supernatural. This aim is emblematical of the best of his poetry, as will be seen. Coleridge was at Jesus College, Cambridge, from 1791 to 1794, with an interval in a regiment of dragoons (under the name of 'Comberback'), from which his friends bought him out. In 1795, he married Miss Sarah Fricker, of Bristol, the sister of Southey's wife. Wife and family and the Wordsworths, whose friendship he then made, should have made a different man of him, if anything could, but nothing could. He said of himself to Thelwall in 1796: 'The walk of the whole man indicates *indolence capable of energies*. I am and ever have been a great reader, and have read almost everything, a library cormorant. I am *deep* in all out of the way books. whether of the monkish times or the

Coleridge,
 1772-1834.

puritanical era.' 'Indolence capable of energies'—no genius ever described himself more accurately. Lamb called him 'an archangel a little damaged.' There are most curious points of similarity between the careers of Coleridge and De Quincey, especially in that both were failures in the sanctuary of home, both were the slaves of opium. Yet, curiously enough, Coleridge has often been judged the more severely of the two. In 1798, the brothers Wedgwood, with singular generosity, secured him an income for life, and he went to Germany with the Wordsworths. German metaphysics fascinated him, and turned, as far as production goes, the poet into a philosopher. The gain to his poetry was certainly nil; but the combination of poetic sensibility with philosophical subtlety made him an almost perfect critic. His years of full poetic inspiration were few, two at the most (1797-8), and hence the quantity of his best work is in inverse proportion to its quality. In 1816, in the hope of conquering his habit of taking opium, he went to live with a surgeon at Highgate, and there for eighteen years his house was as a temple, and he was as an oracle, for those interested in three branches of literature—poetry, criticism, and philosophy. 'Coleridge alone among English writers is in the front rank at once as poet, as critic, and as philosopher.'

It is not necessary to attribute the decay of Coleridge's poetic powers, or rather the 'stinting' of the poetic flow, to Germany or to opium; probably this would be to confuse cause and effect. The real cause was something innate in the man, which he himself was painfully aware of. In a poem 'To William Wordsworth' he laments

'Sense of past youth, and manhood come in vain,
And genius given, and knowledge won in vain;
And all which I had culled in wood-walks wild,
And all which patient toil had reared, and all
Commune with thee had opened out—but flowers
Strewed on my corse, and borne upon my bier,
In the same coffin, for the self-same grave!'

But we at least have nothing to lament, for if Coleridge had been Wordsworth or even a 'reformed character,' nothing

can be more certain than that we should never have had 'The Ancient Mariner,' 'Christabel,' 'Kubla Khan,' and 'Love.' If to these be added 'Dejection' and 'France,' the rest is negligible. The four first-named may be called 'dream poems.' 'Kubla Khan' was actually a dream;¹ it is a fragment because he was interrupted in transcribing it by an unspeakable caller. Coleridge pointed out to Hazlitt that there is 'a class of poetry built on the foundation of dreams.' In such poetry he is *facile princeps* in universal literature. His poetry has, Saintsbury says, 'what one hears at most three or four times in English, at most ten or twelve times in all literature—the first note, with its endless echo-promise, of a new poetry.' This is the more remarkable because Coleridge had begun in the old wooden eighteenth century style. 'He has the unique distinction among the singers of his time of himself exemplifying the antagonistic styles within the compass of his own verse.'

To the development of English poetry, Christabel, though only a fragment, is Coleridge's most important contribution. 'The metre of the 'Christabel,' says the Preface, is not, properly speaking, irregular, though it may seem so from its being founded on a new principle: namely, that of counting in each line the accents, not the syllables. Though the latter may vary from seven to twelve, yet in each line the accents will be found to be only four. Nevertheless this occasional variation in number of syllables is not introduced wantonly, or for the mere ends of convenience, but in correspondence with some transition in the nature of the imagery or passion.' Coleridge was unaware that his 'new principle' is that upon which the oldest English verse is constructed. So were his brother poets, but they seized upon it with delight. While Coleridge was hoping for a return of the inspiration which would enable him to complete the poem, the MS. fragment was left to flutter about the literary circles. In 1801, Scott heard it recited by Sir John Stoddart, and 'the music in his heart he

¹ The writer apologises to the Psychical Research Society: he should have said it passed from sub-liminal into supra-liminal consciousness during sleep.

bore,' reproducing it as best he could in the 'Lay of the Last Minstrel' (1805), whence Byron borrowed it for his 'Siege of Corinth' and 'Parisina' (1816).

That Coleridge is the supreme musician of English poetry will be seen by our first quotation—from 'Kubla Khan.'

'In Xanadu did Kubla Khan
A stately pleasure-dome decree:
Where Alph, the sacred river, ran
Through caverns measureless to man
Down to a sunless sea.
So twice five miles of fertile ground
With walls and towers were girdled round:
And there were gardens bright with sinuous rills,
Where blossomed many an incense-bearing tree;
And here were forests ancient as the hills,
Enfolding sunny spots of greenery.'

The second quotation is from 'France,' which Shelley declared to be the finest ode of modern times:

'Ye clouds! that far above me float and pause,
Whose pathless march no mortal may control!
Ye ocean-waves! that, wheresoe'er ye roll,
Yield homage only to eternal laws!
Ye woods! that listen to the night-birds singing,
Midway the smooth and perilous slope reclined,
Save when your own imperious branches swinging
Have made a solemn music of the wind!
Where, like a man beloved of God,
Thro' glooms, which never woodman trod,
How oft, pursuing fancies holy,
My moonlight way o'er flowering weeds I wound,
Inspired beyond the guess of folly,
By each rude shape and wild unconquerable sound!
O ye loud waves! and O ye forest high!
And O ye clouds that far above me soared!
Thou rising sun! thou blue rejoicing sky!
Yea, everything that is and will be free!
Bear witness for me, wheresoe'er ye be,
With what deep worship I have still adored
The spirit of divinest liberty.'

What little need be said about Scott's life may be said here; his prose will be treated in the next chapter. Scott's poetry belongs to the interval between Coleridge's and Byron's. As Byron's poetry

dealt with the present and Shelley's with the future; so on the other hand, Scott's poetry dealt with the less remote, and Keats's with the more remote, past. Of the boy Scott we may get a good idea from a fragment of his 'Autobiography': 'The summer day sped onwards so fast that, notwithstanding the sharp appetite of thirteen, I forgot the hour of dinner, was sought for with anxiety, and was still found entranced in my intellectual banquet. To read and to remember was in this instance the same thing, and henceforth I overwhelmed my schoolfellows and all who would hearken to me with tragical recitations from the ballads of Bishop Percy.' It is often supposed that Scott was a poet by birth and a novelist by accident; it would probably be much easier to show that his whole training and early life were preparing the future historical novelist, and that it was only by accident poetry diverted him for a time from his life's work. The Scottish Borders and Lowlands were the 'happy hunting-ground' of his youth and early manhood. He said he thought he should die if he could not see the heather once a year. He traced his descent from the great Border family, now represented by the Duke of Buccleuch; in 1802-3 he edited the 'Minstrelsy of the Scottish Border,' a collection second in importance to Percy's; his first, perhaps his best, poem, the 'Lay of the Last Minstrel,' was on a Border subject; he aspired to be a modern representative of the great Border lairds, and built Abbotsford within sound of the ripple of the Tweed; Wordsworth in 'Yarrow Revisited' calls him the 'Border Minstrel.' His life was prosperous and happy until the downfall of the Constables and the Ballantynes, his publishers and printers, in 1826, a crash which involved him in liabilities amounting to £117,000. His attempt at the age of fifty-five to wipe off this debt is one of the most heroic stories in literary history. In five years he had repaid £63,000, but the effort killed him. When in 1831 he went for a voyage in a vessel placed at his disposal by the King, Wordsworth wrote:

'The might
Of the whole world's good wishes with him goes;
Blessings and prayers, in nobler retinue

Than sceptred king or laurelled conqueror knows,
Follow this wondrous Potentate.'

He returned in time to die at Abbotsford in 1832.

Scott was, in a popular sense, at the head of living English poets until his pupil, Byron, 'bet him' in 'Childe Harold' (1812) and the Eastern Tales; from 1814 he was at the head of living prose writers. His strength as a poet lies in narrative and in exquisite little lyrics. His narrative poems are a kind of elaborated ballad, without the 'preciousness' or naïveté of the true ballad. There is nothing of the personal or autobiographical in his poetry; there is nothing of Byron's intensity of feeling or force of personality. He shows a great love of external nature; but nature is hardly sufficing in herself; she must be haunted or peopled with human beings, with wild Highlanders or a legendary 'lady.' Thus we see the force of the complaints of current criticism, that we outgrow Scott's poetry, that it ceases to satisfy our deeper thoughts and longings; to which it may be replied that it was never intended to; let it fill its niche. To another complaint, that of composition and versification of almost Byronic slovenliness, no satisfactory reply can be given. Yet, to what perfection Scott can attain in his own line of choice, the following short extracts will show.

'Proud Maisie is in the wood,
Walking so early;
Sweet Robin sits on the bush,
Singing so rarely.

"Tell me, thou bonny bird,
When shall I marry me?"—

"When six braw gentlemen
Kirkward shall carry ye."

"Who makes the bridal bed,
Birdie, say truly?"—

"The gray-headed sexton
That delves the grave duly."

"The glow-worm o'er grave and stone
Shall light thee steady.
'The owl from the steeple sing,
'Welcome, proud lady.'"

'The bride kiss'd the goblet: the knight took it up,
 He quaff'd off the wine, and he threw down the cup.
 She look'd down to blush, and she look'd up to sigh,
 With a smile on her lips, and a tear in her eye.
 He took her soft hand, ere her mother could bar,—
 "Now tread we a measure!" said young Lochinvar.

'So stately his form, and so lovely her face,
 That never a hall such a galliard did grace;
 While her mother did fret, and her father did fume,
 And the bridegroom stood dangling his bonnet and plume;
 And the bride-maidens whisper'd, "'Twere better by far,
 To have match'd our fair cousin with young Lochinvar."

'One touch to her hand, and one word in her ear,
 When they reach'd the hall-door, and the charger stood near;
 So light to the croupe the fair lady he swung,
 So light to the saddle before her he sprang!
 "She is won! we are gone, over bank, bush, and scaur;
 They'll have fleet steeds that follow," quoth young Lochinvar.'

Byron, Shelley, Keats! What a trio! What inexhaustible romantic interest, what marvellous and fascinating life-stories, crowded into the space of thirty-six, thirty, twenty-six years, respectively! But our business is history and criticism. If the judgment of foreign nations were that Lord Byron, of a contemporary posterity, Byron might 1789-1824. be the greatest of English poets, for he had an enormous reputation abroad. 'In Byron's hands English poetry became for the first time European poetry.' In 1820, the French poet Lamartine addressed to him his poem 'L'Homme,' which is at once flattering and outspoken, as the following lines will show:

'Et toi, qui daas tes mains
 Tiens le cœur palpitant des sensibles humains,
 Byron, viens en tirer des torrents d'harmonie:
 C'est pour la vérité que Dieu fit le génie.
 Jette un cri vers le ciel, ô chantre des enfans!
 Le ciel même aux damnés envîra tes concerts. . .
 Dédaigne un faux encens qu'on t'offre de si bas:
 La gloire ne peut être où la vertu n'est pas.'

Matthew Arnold prophesied that 'when the year 1900 is turned; and our nation comes to recount her poetic glories in the century which has then just ended, the first names with her will be these' [Wordsworth and Byron]. We

are now two years from the close of the century, and much may happen in two years; but such a rehabilitation of Byron as is here prophesied is hardly to be anticipated before 'the inevitable break-up of the old order' which is to bring the world round to Matthew Arnold's opinion. Yet Byron's is a wonderful figure in the first quarter of the century; his personality and his poetry together 'subjugated' his contemporaries, overwhelmed them, oppressed their judgment. The causes of this we have now to inquire into, and elicit by the way the reason for the difference between their estimate and ours.

Byron's life is on the whole not a pleasant record. His father was—not too put too fine a point upon it—an unmitigated blackguard. His mother alternated caresses with reproaches, and was the most suitable woman that could have been selected not to train the poet. At the age of ten the death of his uncle made him Lord Byron and owner of Newstead Abbey. He was (not to say educated) at Harrow, and afterwards at Trinity College, Cambridge. Then he travelled for two years, and Greece made him a poet. When he returned and had published the record of his journeys in the first two cantos of 'Childe Harold' (1812), 'I awoke one morning and found myself famous.' He had 'bet' Scott on his own ground, as the latter readily admitted, and thus has some of the credit for having driven him to fiction. Byron became the lion of London Society and sank low in dissipation. In 1815, he married Miss Milbanke; five weeks after the birth of their only child she left him for ever—why has never been certainly known. Society sided with Lady Byron, and in 1816 her husband left England, never to return. His scorn, anger, and desperation found vent in poetry, and in the succeeding years until 1823 all the best of his work was written. During that time he lived in Switzerland and Italy; made and enjoyed the friendship of Shelley, and from 1819 more than the friendship of the Countess Guiccioli, who became, in a sense, his 'saviour.' Under the roof of her father, Count Gamba, Byron lived almost

* 'Whatever we may think of him, we shall not be subjugated by him as they were.'—M. Arnold.

a domesticated life until, in 1823, the struggle of the Greeks for independence enlisted his sympathies, his energies, and his purse, and in the cause of Greece he died of fever at Missolonghi in April, 1824.

Even such a brief record as the foregoing should help us to understand Byron's poetry, for his best poetry is his own life 'rimed up.' The mass, the range, the rush, the force, the versatility of his production during the last twelve years of his life are alike remarkable. From the juvenile 'Hours of Idleness' to the crude attack on his critics; from the first two cantos of 'Ohilde Harold' to the last two, which are virtually a different poem; from his Eastern Tales to the 'Hebrew Melodies'; from the 'Prisoner of Chillon' (Bonnivard, who defended Geneva against the Duke of Savoy) to the dramatic poem 'Manfred'; from the 'Lament of Tasso' (who was imprisoned as a madman at Ferrara because he had dared to love Leonora, the Duke's sister) to the *jou d'esprit*, 'Beppo'; from 'Marino Faliero,' a historical tragedy, to 'Cain, a mystery'; and from the 'Vision of Judgment,' 'the greatest of modern satires,' to 'Don Juan,' the genius of Byron moved with consummate ease of expression and power of concentration, though not with equal success in each case. It was 'Ohilde Harold' that first took the world, not England alone, by storm, and the reason is not far to seek. Europe was in the last deadly throes of the struggle with Napoleon, and Byron alone among the poets of that day took what filled the thoughts of every one for the themes of his muse. 'There was not a parish of Great Britain in which there was not some household that had a direct personal interest in the scene of the pilgrim's travels—"some friend, some brother there." . . . Loose and rambling as "Ohilde Harold" is, it yet had for the time an unconscious art; it entered the absorbing tumult of a hot and feverish struggle, and opened a way in the dark clouds gathering over the combatants through which they could see the blue vault and the shining stars.' But Byron's fame with us and with posterity will rest, among his poems, chiefly on the 'Vision of Judgment' and on his poetical journal of reminiscences,

'Don Juan'; but much more on the most brilliant passages in the whole of his poetry than on any particular poems, for Byron was, as has been well said, 'essentially-an occasional poet.' 'If things are farcical,' he said to Trélawny in 1823, 'they will do for "Don Juan"; if heroical, you shall have another canto of "Childe Harold."' That is to say, the events of his life, as we have said, furnished the material of his best poetry. He thought shallowly, but he felt deeply. What moved him deeply—and his was not a shallow nature for all his mannerisms and affectations—he cast into some too hastily prepared poetic mould, and the result was usually *unequal*. Byron's greatest defects were as an artist: his versification is slovenly; he bestowed sufficient care neither on the conception of his subject as an organic whole, nor on the working out of details. Even Matthew Arnold has to admit: 'Byron is so negligent in his poetical style, he is often, to say the truth, so slovenly, slipshod, and infelicitous, he is so little haunted by the true artist's fine passion for the correct use and consummate management of words, that he may be described as having for this artistic gift the insensibility of the barbarian.' Yet, in spite of all this, William Morris calls him 'the greatest literary power of this century'; he is the poet of conflict, and we cannot do him full justice in these piping times of peace. Then Byron's fame is to fluctuate with peace and war! In any case, there is not yet a sufficient consensus of opinion to make a final verdict possible.

We take as our specimen the opening stanzas of the 'Vision of Judgment,' of which Symonds says: 'His humour, common sense, inventive faculty, and luminous imagination, are here, as nowhere else, combined in perfect fusion.'

'Saint Peter sat by the celestial gate:

His keys were rusty, and the lock was dull,

So little trouble had been given of late:

Not that the place by any means was full,

But since the Gallic era "eighty-eight,"

The devils had ta'en a longer, stronger pull,

And "a pull all together," as they say

At sea—which drew most souls another way.

- 'The angels all were singing out of tune,
And hoarse with having little else to do,
Excepting to wind up the sun and moon,
Or curb a runaway young star or two,
Or wild colt of a comet, which too soon
Broke out of bounds o'er the ethereal blue,
Splitting some planet with its playful tail,
As boats are sometimes by a wanton whale.
- 'The guardian seraphs had retired on high,
Finding their charges past all care below;
Terrestrial business fill'd naught in the sky
Save the recording angel's black bureau;
Who found, indeed, the facts to multiply
With such rapidity of vice and woe,
That he had stripp'd off both his wings in quills,
And yet was in arrears of human ills.
- 'His business so augmented of late years,
That he was forced, against his will no doubt
(Just like those cherubs, earthly ministers),
For some resource to turn himself about,
And claim the help of his celestial peers.
To aid him ere he should be quite worn out,
By the increased demand for his remarks
Six angels and twelve saints wore mended his cloaks.
- 'This was a handsome board—at least for heaven;
And yet they had even then enough to do,
So many conquerors' cars were daily driven,
So many kingdoms fitted up anew;
Each day, too, slew its thousands six or seven,
Till at the crowning carnage, Waterloo,
They threw their pens down in divine disgust,
The page was so besmear'd with blood and dust.'

Matthew Arnold, in his somewhat laboured plea for the supremacy of Wordsworth and Byron in 19th century poetry, describes Shelley as a 'beautiful and ineffectual angel, beating in the void his luminous wings in vain.' For one who makes 'criticism of life' the basis of his literary estimates, to place Byron in higher rank than Shelley can only be regarded as the eccentricity of genius. If the reader has any doubt on the point, one other sentence will set his mind at rest:

¹ 'The end and aim of all literature is, if one considers it attentively, nothing but that:—a criticism of life.'

'Except for a few short things and single stanzas, his [Shelley's] original poetry is less satisfactory than his translations, for in these the subject-matter was found for him.'¹ After that, we will read this critic's opinions with interest, and judge for ourselves. There are some who go elsewhere for their 'criticism of life' (if life must be criticised), and turn to poetry for the delight born of noble thoughts set to highest verbal music, and to them Shelley is a 'beautiful angel' singing songs often of unearthly beauty and prompting to nobler ideals.

It is impossible to do justice to Shelley's poetry, from whatever point of view, if we entirely disregard the circumstances of his life. Yet this brings us face to face with a most difficult task: for, on the one hand, the last word on the subject is certainly not yet said,² and, on the other, without a full exposition, such as space forbids, there is great danger of giving misleading impressions. With this caution, we confine ourselves, as far as possible, to a bare chronicle of facts, and in criticism largely to the judgments of acknowledged authorities.

Percy Bysshe Shelley was the most extraordinary son ever born to a wealthy English baronet; the very antithesis and opposite of every tradition, sentiment, and creed of his class seemed to be implanted within him from his early years. At Eton and at University College, Oxford, he was in constant rebellion against established authority, until in 1811 his pamphlet on the 'Necessity of Atheism,' sent to all the heads of colleges with a challenge to refute his heresies, led to his expulsion from the University.³ In the same year he married Harriet Westbrook, a girl of sixteen, by whom he had two children, and whom he

¹ The next sentence seems too foolish for anything but a foot-note: 'Nay, I doubt whether his delightful Essays and Letters, which deserve to be far more read than they are now, will not resist the wear and tear of time better, and finally come to stand higher, than his poetry.' The reference to Shelley's prose, if taken by itself, is just. His most important prose work is the 'Defence of Poetry' (1820), provoked by his friend Peacock's 'Four Ages of Poetry.'

² We hear of momentous letters which are not accessible to us at the time of writing, and the time is not yet (1898) expired for the final Claremont revelations to be made.

³ University College has so far relented as to admit a monument of Shelley within her sacred precincts, and tacitly to acknowledge him the most famous of her sons.

deserted in 1814 for Mary Godwin, daughter of William Godwin, the novelist and political writer. When Harriet drowned herself in the Serpentine two years later, Mary Godwin became Mrs. Shelley, but the Court of Chancery deprived the poet of the custody of his children. In 1818 Shelley left England, and spent the rest of his life in Italy, where he was much in the society of Byron (for the latter's good). In 1822 his boat foundered or was run down, and he and his friend Williams were drowned. His body washed ashore, and was burnt in the presence of Byron, Leigh Hunt, and Trelawny. The life of Shelley lies worlds apart from that of Byron. His treatment of Harriet apart, his private life was not vicious, but, on the contrary, in many respects exemplary. As far as the ideas which he sang were capable of application to life, he applied them in his own conduct. "He preached the equality of man, and he proved that he was willing to practise it." He was generous and benevolent to a fault.

The golden period of Shelley's productiveness was the last four years of his life. Up to 1818 he had written immature verse,—a unique copy of his earliest poetry, 'Poems by Victor and Caziro,' was only recovered in 1898,—'Queen Mab,' 'Alastor' and 'Laon and Cyntha' (1817; on the tyrannies of politics and creeds, and the supposed effective method of suppressing them), the last-named republished with omissions the following year as 'The Revolt of Islam'; but almost all of his poetry that we could worst spare belongs to 1818 and after. 'Julian and Maddalo' are Shelley and Byron, and the poem reports one of their conversations. The conjunction is significant. The two poets in their different ways represent two sides of the French Revolution: Byron its backward, destructive side; Shelley its, unfortunately less prominent, forward, reconstructive, idealist side. 'If in Byron one side of the Revolution displays itself with power, that which is more materialistic and more personal, the assertion of unbounded egoism and the rights of the individual, in Shelley appears the reverse side, that which is more ideal, more religious, its tendency to merge the personal life in a larger life which is impersonal, whether the life of humanity or of

external nature.' Of his longer works, the most perfect are the two lyric 'Greek' dramas, 'Prometheus Unbound' and 'Hellas,' the latter a dream of rejuvenated Greece and the world generally prompted by the uprising of the Greeks against the Turks. 'Adonais' is an elegy on the death of Keats, whose death Shelley supposed to have resulted from a savage review of his 'Endymion' in the *Quarterly Review*.¹ The 'Witch of Atlas' and 'Epipsychidion' stand on about the same poetic level as 'Adonais.' But Shelley is nowhere greater than in his many detached or detachable shorter lyrical pieces, among which may be named 'The Skylark,' 'The Cloud,' 'To Constantia Singing,' 'Ode to the West Wind,' 'Rarely, rarely, comest thou,' 'The Ode to Liberty,' and 'To Night' (quoted below).

The extremes of Shelley criticism may be represented by the sentences quoted from Matthew Arnold above (p. 576), and the following from Swinburne: 'He was alone the perfect singing-god; his thoughts, words, deeds, all sang together.... The master singer of our modern race and age; the poet beloved above all other poets, being beyond all other poets—in one word, and the only proper word—divine.' The difference is chiefly one of point of view: Arnold finds 'in his poetry the incurable want, in general, of a sound subject-matter, and the incurable fault, in consequence, of unsubstantiality. Those who extol him as the poet of clouds, the poet of sunsets, are only saying that he did not, in fact, lay hold upon the poet's right subject-matter; and in honest truth, with all his charm of soul and spirit, and with all his gift of musical diction and movement, he never, or hardly ever, did.' In a word, Mr. Arnold finds in him no criticism of life. On the other hand, Swinburne cares above all things for the melody and music of verse, and these he finds in Shelley's divine lyric gift. But there is a 'via media,' a sane mean of criticism. Still better, there is a blessed faculty of going to each poet for the best that *he* can give us, with thankfulness and praise. No one will accuse Herford of anything but sane,

¹ Op. 'Tis strange the mind, that very fiery particle,
Should let itself be snuffed out by an article'—'Don Juan,' xi. 59

sound, impartial judgments. 'The question (he writes) with which the "Triumph of Life" abruptly closes, "Then what is life, I cried"—remained for ever unanswered in speech of his. Shelley's own life was one of those which most preclude an unworthy answer to it. None of his contemporaries lived from first to last so completely under the dominance of "soul-light"; his errors in conduct and weaknesses in art were alike rooted in this supreme quality.' His boyish resolve had been

'I will be wise,
And just, and free, and mild, if in me lies
Such power, for I grow weary to behold
The selfish and the strong still tyrannise
Without reproach or check.'

and he carried it out. Shelley was a revolutionary, but he was also a transcendental, poet. If the one quality repels us, the other should equally attract. If he lived in an unpractical, ethereal world, his poetry is drawing many souls upwards to hold communion with him there. As Scott is the poet of the romantic past, Shelley is the poet of the glorious future. In Byron the intellect is supreme and the imagination subordinate; in Shelley the intellect is servant to the imagination. With eyes fixed on the splendid apparitions with which he peopled space, he went through the world not seeing the high road, stumbling over the stones of the road side.

'As a poet,' says J. A. Symonds, 'Shelley contributed a new quality to English literature—a quality of ideality, freedom, and spiritual audacity, which severe critics of other nations think we lack. Byron's daring is in a different region: his elemental worldliness and pungent satire do not liberate our energies, or cheer us with new hopes and splendid vistas. Wordsworth, the very antithesis to Shelley in his reverent accord with institutions, suits our meditative mood, sustains us with a sound philosophy, and braces us by a healthy contact with the Nature he so dearly loved. But in Wordsworth there is none of Shelley's magnetism. What remains of permanent value in Coleridge's poetry—such works as 'Christabel,' the 'Ancient Mariner,' or 'Kubla Khan'—is a product of pure

artistic fancy, tempered by the author's mysticism. Keats, true and sacred poet as he was, loved Nature with a somewhat sensuous devotion . . . nor did he share the prophetic fire which burns in Shelley's verse. In none of Shelley's greatest contemporaries was the lyrical faculty so paramount; and whether we consider his minor songs, his odes, or his more complicated choral dramas, we acknowledge that he was the loftiest and the most spontaneous singer of our language. In range of power he was also conspicuous above the rest. . . . While his genius was so varied, and its flight so unapproached in swiftness, it would be vain to deny that Shelley, as an artist, had faults from which the men with whom I have compared him were more free. The most prominent of these are haste, incoherence, verbal carelessness, incompleteness, a want of narrative force, and a weak hold on objective realities.'

Our selections are some stanzas from 'Adonais,' and the exquisite little song 'To Night.'

'He has outsoared the shadow of our night;
 Envy and calumny, and hate and pain,
 And that unrest which men miscall delight,
 Can touch him not and torture not again;
 From the contagion of the world's slow stain
 He is secure, and now can never mourn
 A heart grown cold, a head grown grey in vain;
 Nor, when the spirit's self has ceased to burn,
 With sparkless ashes load an unlamented urn.

'He lives, he wakes—'tis Death is dead, not he;
 Mourn not for Adonais—Thou, young Dawn,
 Turn all thy dew to splendour, for from thee
 The spirit thou lamentest is not gone;
 'Ye caverns and ye forests, cease to moan!
 Cease ye faint flowers and fountains, and thou Air,
 Which like a mourning veil thy scarf hadst thrown
 O'er the abandoned Earth, now leave it bare
 Even to the joyous stars which smile on its despair!

'He is made one with Nature: there is heard
 His voice in all her music, from the moan
 Of thunder to the song of night's sweet bird;
 He is a presence to be felt and known
 In darkness and in light, from herb and stone,

Spreading itself where'er that Power may move
Which has withdrawn his being to its own ;
Which yields the world with never wearied love,
Sustains it from beneath, and kindles it above.

'He is a portion of the loveliness
Which once he made more lovely.'

'Swiftly walk over the western wave,
Spirit of Night !
Out of the misty eastern cave,
Where all the long and lone daylight
Thou wovest dreams of joy and fear,
Which make thee terrible and dear,—
Swift be thy flight !

'Wrap thy form in a mantle gray,
Star-inwrought !
Blind with thine hair the eyes of Day ;
Kiss her until she be wearied out,
Then wander o'er city, and sea, and land,
Touching all with thine opiate wand—
Come, long sought !

'When I arose and saw the dawn,
I sighed for thee ;
When light rode high, and the dew was gone,
And noon lay heavy on flower and tree,
And the weary Day turned to his rest,
Lingering like an unloved guest,
I sighed for thee.

'Thy brother Death came, and cried,
Wouldst thou me ?
Thy sweet child Sleep, the filmy-eyed,
Murmured like a noon-tide bee,
Shall I nestle near thy side ?
Wouldst thou me ?—And I replied,
No, not thee !

'Death will come when thou art dead,
Soon, too soon—
Sleep will come when thou art fled ;
Of neither would I ask the boon
I ask of thee, beloved Night—
Swift be thine approaching flight,
Come soon, soon !'

Keats (like Shelley's ashes) lies in the Protestant cemetery at Rome, and on his grave, by his own desire, is the inscription: 'Here lies one whose name was writ in water.' 'Posterity has agreed with him that it is,' adds Saintsbury, 'but in the Water of Life.' John Keats came

<sup>Keats
1795-1821.</sup> of unpoetical parentage; his father was employed in livery stables in London. He is therefore, like his master, Spenser, a cockney poet. It is impossible to conceive of circumstances of birth and upbringing being more completely belied. The cockney poet becomes the modern singer of Greece; the surgeon's apprentice becomes the apostle of beauty, the founder of the Tennysonian school of flawless workmanship. Keats gave promise in his surgical studies, but they were distasteful to him, and in the year that his first volume of 'Poems' (1817) appeared he abandoned them. In 1818 came 'Endymion,' insolently reviewed in the *Quarterly* and *Blackwood*. The latter informed Keats that a 'starved apothecary was better than a starved poet,' and called his poem 'calm, settled, imperturbable, drivelling idiocy.' Not these reviews, as Shelley supposed, but the deadly malady consumption, led to the poet's early death. In a volume of 1820 all his most perfect work appeared. In the fall of that year he sailed for Naples with his friend Severn, who tended him with a woman's devotion until his death at Rome in February, 1821.

Keats's genius, like Shelley's, matured with astounding rapidity, and especially his artistic perception and execution. ^{His Poems.} 'Endymion,' an adaptation of the classical myth of Endymion and the Moon to the poet and his pursuit of beauty, has little to recommend it beyond its wealth of phrase and imagery, and these very excellences by their excess turn to defects. It shows a desire for mere prettinesses of diction, an intemperate use of ornament, a striving after verbal effect at the expense of thought. But if we turn to his later Greek fragment, 'Hyperion,' which Byron pronounced 'as sublime as Aeschylus,' we find the faults of the earlier poem chastened and toned down into something like Attic severity and simplicity. 'Lamia' is founded on the story

of a young man wedded to a serpent which had assumed the form of a beautiful woman. 'Isabella, or the Pot of Basil,' was Keats's contribution to a volume of 'Tales from Boccaccio,' planned with his friend Reynolds, and shows what he could do in poetic narrative. 'The Eve of St. Agnes' approaches most nearly, among his complete poems, to the perfect standard attained in the six 'Odes' and in the pick of the 'Sonnets.' The word 'perfect' is no exaggeration; absolutely perfect in conception, in execution, are the best of the odes and sonnets.

What might not this genius of twenty-five have accomplished if he had lived? His early death was the greatest loss that English poetry ever suffered, for he had learnt more of his art, of discipline and self-restraint, between 'Endymion' and the 'Odes' than any other English poet ever learnt, we may safely say, in the same space of time. To

Keats on himself. remove some popular misconceptions on this and other points, let us quote a few sentences of his own: 'Oh for a life of sensations rather than of thoughts.' 'Knowing within myself the manner in which this poem ["Endymion"] has been produced, it is not without a feeling of regret that I make it public. What manner I mean will be quite clear to the reader, who must soon perceive great inexperience, immaturity, and every error denoting a feverish attempt rather than a deed accomplished.' 'I have not the slightest feeling of humility towards the public or to anything in existence but the Eternal Being, the Principle of Beauty, and the Memory of Great Men.' 'I could not live without the love of my friends; I would jump down Etna for any great public good—but I hate a mawkish popularity.' 'Praise or blame has but a momentary effect on the man whose love of beauty in the abstract makes him a severe critic of his own works. My own criticism has given me pain without comparison beyond what *Blackwood* or the *Quarterly* could possibly inflict; and also, when I feel I am right, no external praise can give me such a glow as my own solitary re-perception and rectification of what is fine.' 'I find there is no worthy pursuit but the idea of doing some good to the world.' 'There is but one way for me.

The road lies through application, study, and thought. I will pursue it.' 'The best sort of poetry—that is all I care for, all I live for.' 'If I should die, I have left no immortal work behind me—nothing to make my friends proud of my memory; but I have loved the principle of beauty in all things.' Or, in the concluding lines of his 'Ode on a Grecian Urn,'

'Beauty is truth, truth beauty,—that is all
Ye know on earth, and all ye need to know.'

Note the advance from 'Oh, for a life of sensations!' to 'I have loved the principle of beauty in all things.' People make the absurd mistake of judging Keats as if we possessed anything but what would be the *juvenilia* of other poets. Compare his work with that of the first twenty-five years of the life of any other English poet, of Byron or Shelley for example, and he has nothing to fear from the comparison. Like Shelley, Keats is an inspired poet. 'The mood which all artists require, covet, and find most rare,' was the common mood with him. The lives of many poets have to be set in the opposite scale to their poetry; the life of Keats tells into his poetry, enriches it, makes it more fully comprehensible. To say that he lacked the self-restraint and self-castigation necessary for choice and for rejection, for balance and for proportion, which must accompany the divine gift, is not wholly true, and, if true, is only to say that his poetic art was not fully matured. Impassioned admiration of Greek sculpture, especially in the Elgin marbles, gave a more potent turn to Keats's poetry than any other external influence. Byron recognised this when he spoke of him as having

'without Greek
Contrived to talk about the gods of late
Much as they might have been supposed to speak.'

In spite of his ignorance of Greek, he was as near to the Greek spirit as any Englishman has ever been. Lastly, he was a true 'romantic' in his love of Nature. 'Keats discovers,' says Bridges, 'in the most usual objects either beauty or sources of delight or comfort, or sometimes even

of imaginative horror, which are all new; and here his originality seems inexhaustible, and his wide poetic sympathies the strongest. Nor does he confine himself to matters of which he could have had much experience; he makes Nature the object of his imaginative faculty—Nature apart from man, or related to man as an enchantress to a dreamer.'

ODE TO A NIGHTINGALE.

- 'My heart aches, and a drowsy numbness pains
 My sense, as though of hemlock I had drunk,
 Or emptied some dull opiate to the drains
 One minute past, and Lethe-wards had sunk :
 'Tis not through envy of thy happy lot,
 But being too happy in thy happiness,—
 That thou, light-winged Dryad of the trees,
 In some melodious plot
 Of beechen green, and shadows numberless,
 Singest of summer in full-throated ease.
- 'Oh ! for a draught of vintage, that hath been
 Cooled a long age in the deep-delved earth,
 Tasting of Flora and the country green,
 Dance, and Provençal song, and sun-burnt mirth !
 Oh ! for a beaker full of the warm South,
 Full of the true, the blushful Hippocrene,
 With beaded bubbles winking at the brim,
 And purpled-stained mouth ;
 That I might drink, and leave the world unseen,
 And with thee fade away into the forest dim ;
- 'Fade far away, dissolve, and quite forget
 What thou among the leaves hast never known,
 The weariness, the fever, and the fret
 Here, where men sit and hear each other groan ;
 Where palsy shakes a few, sad, last gray hairs,
 Where youth grows pale, and spectre-thin, and dies,
 Where but to think is to be full of sorrow
 And leaden-eyed despairs,
 Where Beauty cannot keep her lustrous eyes,
 Or new Love pine at them beyond to-morrow.
- 'Away ! away ! for I will fly to thee,
 Not charioted by Bacchus and his pards,
 But on the viewless wings of Poesy,
 Though the dull brain perplexes and retards :

Already with thee ! tender is the night,
 And haply the Queen-Moon is on her throne,
 Clustered around by all her starry fays ;
 But here there is no light,
 Save what from heaven is with the breezes blown
 Through verdurous glooms and winding mossy ways .

‘ I cannot see what flowers are at my feet,
 Nor what soft incense hangs upon the boughs,
 But in embalmed darkness guess each sweet
 Wherewith the seasonable month endows
 The grass, the thicket, and the fruit-tree wild ;
 White hawthorn, and the pastoral eglantine ;
 Fast-fading violets covered in leaves ;
 And mid-May’s eldest child,
 The coming musk-rose, full of dewy wine,
 The murmurous haunt of flies on summer eves..

‘ Darkling I listen ; and for many a time
 I have been half in love with easeful Death,
 Called him soft names in many a mused rhyme,
 To take into the air my quiet breath ;
 Now more than ever seems it rich to die,
 To cease upon the midnight with no pain,
 While thou art pouring forth thy soul abroad
 In such an ecstasy !
 Still wouldst thou sing, and I have ears in vain—
 To thy high requiem become a sod.

‘ Thou wast not born for death, immortal bird !
 No hungry generations tread thee down ;
 The voice I hear this passing night was heard
 In ancient days by emperor and clown ;
 Perhaps the self-same song that found a path
 Through the sad heart of Ruth when sick for home
 She stood in tears amid the alien corn ;
 The same that oft-times hath
 Charmed magic casements, opening on the foam
 Of perilous seas, in faëry lands forlorn.

‘ Forlorn ! the very word is like a bell
 To toll me back from thee to my sole self !
 Adieu ! the fancy cannot cheat so well
 As she is fabled to do, deceiving elf.
 Adieu ! adieu ! thy plaintive anthem fades
 Past the near meadows, over the still stream,
 Up the hill-side ; and now ’tis buried deep
 In the next valley glades :
 Was it a vision, or a waking dream ?
 Fled is that music :—Do I wake or sleep ? ’

That 'grand old pagan,' Walter Savage Landor, published his first volume of 'Poems' in 1795, his last ^{Landor, 1775-1864.} volume of 'Imaginary Conversations' in 1853, and 'Heroic Idylls' in 1863. He belongs to our present period, however, though he overlaps it at both ends. The romantic interest that should attach to Landor's life and literary work has been repelled, in the one case by his unamiable or eccentric character,—'his most intimate friendships were states of unstable equilibrium,'—in the other case more inexplicably. No man who commands such a consensus of distinguished praise is so neglected as Landor. Swinburne says that no English writer since Milton has attained to equal excellence in *both* verse and prose, and writes of him (in a private letter) as 'a man whom I am convinced that future times will always regard as one of the great English Classics in poetry as in prose—and not less certainly as one of the noblest and loftiest characters in the history of letters.' Yet the reading public has so far falsified the prediction. Coleridge asked in 1834: 'What it is that Landor wants to make him a poet? His powers are certainly very considerable, but he seems to be totally deficient in that modifying faculty which compresses several units into one whole. The truth is that he does not possess imagination in its highest form. Hence his poems, taken as wholes, are unintelligible; you have eminences excessively bright, and all the ground around and between them is darkness. Besides which he has never learned with all his energy how to write simple and lucid English.' The simple fact seems to be that Landor is too severely classical, too Greek, to be popular in our present state of culture. He emulated Gray in his 'extreme conciseness of expression, yet pure, perspicuous, and musical.' 'If I could resemble Pindar in nothing else,' wrote Landor, 'I was resolved to be as compendious and exclusive.' The consequence is, his longer poems are not read; but fortunately his 'little language' is his best. Of his shorter pieces, which will not readily be allowed to die, we quote Lamb's favourite, 'Rose Aylmer.'

'Ah what avails the sceptred race,
Ah what the form divine!

What every virtue, every grace!
Rose Aylmer, all were thine.

'Rose Aylmer, whom these wakeful eyes
May weep, but never see,
A night of memories and of sighs
I consecrate to thee.'

The foregoing are the poetic giants of the period; of the rest much less need be said. Time has not been kind to Thomas Campbell's reputation. His 1777-1844. 'Pleasures of Hope' (1799) ran through four editions in one year. It is the most extraordinary blend of romantic subject-matter, the aspirations of an ardent revolutionist, with eighteenth century versification. 'Gertrude of Wyoming' is a narrative poem in the Spenserian stanza (not well suited for narrative), relating the fortunes of a family settled by the Susquehanna, and the destruction of the village of Wyoming by a band of Indians. These things are now neither read nor highly esteemed, and for this reason: they are not inspired. They are the productions of Campbell's workshop. On the other hand, his martial lyrics and some of his ballads have the true touch of inspiration. In 1800 Campbell had gone to the Continent, and 'caught the fever of militarism,' following in the train of armies and hovering round fields of battle. Out of these experiences and his feeling of patriotism arose his three masterpieces, 'Ye Mariners of England' (1801), 'Hohenlinden' (1803), 'Battle of the Baltic' (1809). These, in spite of 'polishing,' and in spite of some crudities of expression—no one has ever found out the meaning of the first two lines quoted below—take rank in their class next to Drayton's 'Battle of Agincourt' by dint of their martial movement and felicities of phrase. Two or three stanzas, taken from the 'Battle of the Baltic' and the 'Soldier's Dream,' will suffice to show Campbell at about his best.

'But the might of England flushed
To anticipate the scene,
And her van the fleetest rushed
O'er the deadly space between.
"Hearts of oak," our captains cried, when each gun

From its adamantine lips
 Spread a death-shade round the ships,
 Like the hurricane eclipse
 Of the sun.'

'Then pledged we the wine cup, and fondly I swore
 From my home and my weeping friends never to part,
 My little ones kissed me a thousand times o'er,
 And my wife sobbed aloud in her fulness of heart:
 'Stay, stay with us, rest, thou art weary and worn';
 And fain was their war-broken soldier to stay;
 But sorrow returned with the dawning of morn,
 And the voice in my dreaming ear melted away.'

If this chapter made any pretence of being chronological (which it does not), George Crabbe would have come at its head, for when our period opens he was taking a twenty-two years' rest from publication. He was born at the charming little Suffolk watering-place of Aldeburgh, where his memory is commemorated by an indiffer-
 Crabbe, 1754-1832. ent bust in the church; became first a surgeon, and later (after he had been saved from a debtor's prison by Burke) curate, in his native-place; was presented to two small livings by Lord Chancellor Thurlow, who told him with an oath 'he was as like Parson Adams [in "Joseph Andrews"] as twelve to a dozen'; was silent, after his 'Newspaper' (1785), for twenty-two years, though he had periodical 'incremations' of manuscript; returned to still more successful poetry with his 'Parish Register' in 1807; and died at a good old age, famous and at peace with all men, even with the author of the parody of the 'Parish Register' in 'Rejected Addresses,' Horace Smith. Up to 1785 Crabbe was writing on in the old, faded style, applauded by Johnson. His 'Library' (1781) is a smooth, almost witless imitation of Pope; indeed he has been called a 'Pope in worsted stockings.' His 'Village', representing his highest level in the eighteenth century, is quite devoid of any trace of naturalism; he is as severe as the Knight of La Mancha in his aversion from all romance. When he begins again, more than fifty years old, to publish poetry, the only trace of the influence of the romantic revival is seen in the greater play allowed to the poet's fancy. He is 'our chief realist

poet.' Byron called him 'Nature's sternest poet, yet the best.' Hazlitt characterised his work with more discrimination: 'His tales turn one and all on the same sort of teasing, helpless, unimaginative distress.' When Crabbe justified his method by Pope's example, 'Nothing,' said Hazlitt, 'can be more dissimilar. Pope describes what is striking, Crabbe would have described merely what was there. In Pope there was an appeal to the imagination; you see what was passing in a poetical point of view.' Narrative poetry lends itself to weak lines; Crabbe is at times weaker than Wordsworth at his weakest. The line that both Tennyson and Fitzgerald claimed to have composed in parody of Wordsworth,

'A Mr. Wilkinson, a clergyman,'

would have been no parody of Crabbe.

FROM THE 'PARISH REGISTER.'

'To pomp and pageantry in nought allied,
A noble peasant, Isaac Ashford died.
Noble he was, contemning all things mean,
His truth unquestioned, and his soul serene:
Of no man's presence Isaac felt afraid,
At no man's question Isaac looked dismayed:
Shame knew him not, he dreaded no disgrace:
Truth, simple truth, was written in his face;
Yet while the serious thought his soul approved,
Cheerful he seemed and gentleness he loved:
To bliss domestic he his heart resigned,
And, with the firmest, had the fondest mind:
Were others joyful, he looked smiling on,
And gave allowance where he needed none;
Good he refused with future ill to buy,
Nor knew a joy that caused reflection's sigh;
A friend to virtue, his unclouded breast
No envy stung, no jealousy distressed;
(Bane of the poor! it wounds their weaker mind,
'To miss one favour which their neighbours find:)
Yet far was he from stoic pride removed;
He felt humanely, and he warmly loved:
I marked his action when his infant died,
And his old neighbour for offence was tried;
The still tears, stealing down that furrowed cheek,
Spoke pity plainer than the tongue can speak.'

Robert Southey's is one of the most highly and rightly honoured names in the roll of English men of letters. His life is a record of hard, conscientious, not over-well rewarded toil. His output was tremendous, though he was not a very rapid worker; the list of his books and articles nearly fills six closely printed pages; his poems run to eight-hundred pages in double columns. His most famous prose-work is his 'Life of Nelson', still a classic. He was laureate for the last thirty years of his life; for the last forty years he lived at Greta Hall near Keswick. Four years before his death he had softening of the brain, the cumulative effect of a life of unremitting labour. Like Wordsworth, he found his greatest happiness in his home. His friend, Sir Henry Taylor, but does Southey justice when he says: 'There were greater poets in his generation, and there were men of a deeper and more far-reaching philosophic faculty; but take him for all in all,—his ardent and genial piety, his moral strength, the magnitude and variety of his powers, the field which he covered in literature, and the beauty of his life,—it may be said of him, justly and with no straining of the truth, that of all his contemporaries he was the greatest MAN.'

After that, and still more after Byron's castigation, we can forgive Southey his laureate 'Vision of Judgment,' which represents his low water-mark in poetry. Of his Poetry. long narrative poems, 'Thalaba the Destroyer' (1801), 'Madoc' (1805), 'The Curse of Kehama' (1810), 'Roderick the last of the Goths' (1814), the last-named is the best; but the best lacks inspiration; they smell of the lamp. As has been brilliantly remarked, "'Roderick" illustrates Wordsworth's theory of poetic language far better than his own practice.'

Southey is not easy to sample in short space; everyone knows the 'Battle of Blenheim' and we therefore give

STANZAS WRITTEN IN HIS LIBRARY.

'My days among the Dead are passed;
 Around me I behold,
 Where'er these casual eyes are cast,
 The mighty minds of old;

My never failing friends are they,
With whom I converse day by day.

‘With them I take delight in weal,
And seek relief in woe;
And while I understand and feel
How much to them I owe,
My cheeks have often been bedewed
With tears of thoughtful gratitude.

‘My thoughts are with the Dead, with them
I live in long-past years,
Their virtues love, their faults condemn,
Partake their hopes and fears,
And from their lessons seek and find
Instruction with an humble mind.

‘My hopes are with the Dead, anon
My place with them will be,
And I with them shall travel on
Through all futurity;
Yet leaving here a name, I trust,
That will not perish in the dust.’

‘Romances and novels in verse,’ said De Quincey, ‘constitute the poetry which is *immediately* successful; and that is a poetry, it may be added, which, being successful through one generation, afterwards is unsuccessful for ever.’ ‘Novels in verse’ or narrative poems were written at this time by Scott, Byron, Campbell, Southey, and Moore, and the destiny which De Quincey predicted has overtaken all their narrative verse, except Scott’s and Moore’s. Thomas Moore lives in poetic history by three works: his ‘Irish Melodies,’ in which his Celtic enthusiasm and patriotism are suppressed in deference to his English drawing-room patrons; his ‘Lalla Rookh’ (tulip cheek), a collection of Persian tales, of which ‘Paradise and the Peri’ is the best known; and the ‘Fudge Family in Paris,’ a satire on the Englishman abroad. He wrote also the well known Lives of Sheridan and Byron. Moore was a clever versifier, who caught the ear of the society of his day with sentimental verse of sweet smoothness, such as now abounds in provincial newspapers and magazines. Moore could write this sort of thing *ad libitum*:

'Believe me, if all those endearing young charms,
Which I gaze on so fondly to-day,
Were to change by to-morrow, and fleet in my arms,
Like fairy-gifts fading away,
Thou would'st still be ador'd, as this moment thou art,
Let thy loveliness fade as it will,
And around the dear ruin each wish of my heart
Would entwine itself verdantly still.'

Henry James Leigh Hunt was the intimate associate of Leigh Hunt, far greater men, among others of Byron, 1784-1859. Shelley, and Keats. Keats owed much to him in the way of friendship, and not a little in the way of his art. This association with greater men has been extended from life to literature (indeed it was from the first in part literary), and, combined with some 'ill luck' both in life and in fame,¹ has depreciated Hunt below his deserts. And his deserts, in the literary sense, were never very great. 'His chief function in literature,' says a critic 'was to further the ease, vivacity, and grace, of which, though in a far choicer kind, Lamb was a master in prose, and Chaucer and Ariosto in verse.' From 1811 to 1813 he was in prison for calling the Regent 'a fat Adonis of fifty,' and there he wrote his longest poem, 'The Story of Rimini.' But he is at his best in shorter pieces, in his translations from the Italian, and in 'Abou Ben Adhem.' He was a versatile writer, and played many parts besides that of poet,—journalist, novelist, biographer, autobiographer, essayist, and critic.

Samuel Rogers, though the junior of Crabbe, has the better claim to be regarded as the *doyen* of the romantic school, to which Crabbe never gave in his adherence. Rogers was a less original and less noteworthy poet; but he swam with the current. He was a wealthy banker, at whose house many of the most famous *literati* of the day met, and to their swelling themes he played a somewhat feeble accompaniment. He felt the romantic influences, but his response to them

¹ 'In spite of Dickens's passionately repentant repudiation, it is still the fashion in certain circles to declare that the selfish, hypocritical sponger, Harold Skimpole [in "Bleak House"], is a portrait of Leigh Hunt drawn from the life by one who knew him well.'

was neither ready nor strongly marked. His earlier poems—he was composing over a period of forty-nine years—are in heroic couplets, and are marked by a good deal of Popian polish and refining; his longest poem, 'Italy,' is in blank verse, but not written with less laborious care. Every one knows the story of 'Ginevra' (in 'Italy').

James Hogg, the 'Ettrick Shepherd' and eccentric bard, was a *protégé* of Scott's, who was introduced to him when he was 'raiding' in the interests of his 'Minstrelsy of the Scottish Border.' Herford is of opinion that he surpassed his sponsor in ultimate poetical quality. His best work, the 'Queen's Wake,' in rivalry of Scott's 'Minstrelsy,' is a collection of ballads set in an ingenious framework. Hogg was one of the projectors of 'Maga' (1817), and figured in its pages as one of the interlocutors in Wilson's 'Noctes Ambrosianae' (1822-33).

Robert Bloomfield (1766-1823) and John Clare (1793-1864) were alike in their humble rustic origin, in receiving their first inspiration from Thomson's 'Seasons,' and in the bucolic character of their poetry; the 'Farmer's Boy' (1798) of the former and the 'Poems Descriptive of Rural Life and Scenery' (1820) of the latter are their best known works. A far more deservedly famous godson

of Thomson was Ebenezer Elliott of Sheffield, the 'Corn-Law Rhymers,' another 'uneducated poet.' He began as a singer of Nature in 'The Vernal Walk' (1798); but the wrongs and sufferings of the poor toilers among whom he lived recalled him to be their knight in the poetic lists, where he championed them 'to the utterance'—did, it may be said, for political reform what Hood did for social reform. His 'Corn-Law Rhymes' are said to have materially assisted in producing that revolt of the manufacturing population of the British Islands against the Corn Laws, which induced their final abrogation in 1846. Dowden, in his sympathetic appreciation, sums up Elliott's poetic achievement in one sentence: 'Elliott's imagination was ambitious, and imperfectly trained: he accordingly dealt with large and passionate themes, entering into them with complete *abandon*; and he was hurried on

to passages of genuine inspiration ; real heights and depths were within his range ; heavenly lights alternate with nether darkness.' We must find room for one verse :

' When wilt Thou save the people ?
 O God of mercy, when ?
 Not kings and lords, but nations !
 Not thrones and crowns, but men !
 Flowers of thy heart, O God, are they ;
 Let them not pass like weeds away—
 Their heritage a sunless day.
 God save the people ! '

The two men with whom we close this chapter belong in part, probably more than any others we have mentioned, to Victorian poetry. 'Tom' Hood's best and most famous pieces, 'The Song of the Shirt' and 'The Bridge of Sighs,' date from but a short time before his death in 1845 ; and it is only the chronological fact that before 1832 he had won lasting poetic fame by his 'Hero and Leander,' 'Plea of the Midsummer Fairies,' 'Dream of Eugene Aram,' and other pieces, that leads to his inclusion here. On the contrary, although John Keble, then vicar of Hursley in Hampshire, was publishing poetry as late as 1847, his one famous work, 'The Christian Year,' appeared in 1827. Keble was associated with Newman and Pusey in the leadership of the Oxford movement. Keble was a religious poet—no more hymn-writer. 'The Christian Year' shows him three parts of the way on the journey from pantheism to sacerdotalism.

CHAPTER XXXV.

PROSE 1798-1832 A.D.

As Wordsworth towers above the poetry of this period, so does Sir Walter Scott above its prose. Not that in Scott. absolute merit on the formal side of their art either Wordsworth is the equal of Shelley or Scott of Lamb, but that their position in the history of the developments of literature, their importance in relation to later poetry and prose respectively, is supreme.¹ As compared with Scott, Lamb was a childless genius. In the two preceding chapters something has been said of the history of prose fiction at this epoch and an outline given of Scott's life. Here therefore our concern is his prose, which we shall not greatly wrong if we limit it to the 'Waverley Novels.'

According to Scott's own account, he had been led to write his earlier romances in verse, instead of in prose, by a series of accidents. 'His poems were therefore a casual The genesis of and temporary deviation from the main purpose 'Waverley.' of his life.' As early as 1800 or thereabouts he had written a chapter of a tale of chivalry in the manner of Walpole's 'Castle of Otranto'; as he humourously says, 'those who complain, not unreasonably, of the profusion of the tales which have followed "Waverley" may bless their

¹ 'For sixteen years,' says Herford in his altogether admirable 'Age of Wordsworth,' "the wonderful series of the "Scotch Novels," as they were called, issued from the Ballantynes' press without a pause; and for the last ten at least, their appearance was watched for as eagerly in Paris and Weimar as in London. The poems had thrown the British world into a passing excitement; the novels enlarged the intellectual horizon of all Europe, created in half a dozen nations the novel of national life, and opened a new epoch in the study of history. Hazlitt, who long refused to read the great Tory's tales, and then said the finest things in the world about them, hardly overstates the difference when he declared that "the poems were received as fashionable and well-dressed acquaintances: we are ready to tear the others in pieces as old friends."'

stars at the narrow escape they have made, by the commencement of the inundation being postponed for fifteen years later.' After the publication of the 'Lay of the last Minstrel' in 1805, Scott wrote about the first seven chapters of 'Waverley,' which was advertised by Ballantyne as about to appear under the title of 'Waverley, or 'tis *fifty* years since,' which was altered in 1814 to 'Sixty.' A friend, to whom he submitted these opening chapters describing Waverley's education in romantic literature ('the passages concerning whose course of reading were imitated from recollections of my own,' says Scott), not unnaturally deemed them to be unworthy of Scott's then reputation. Scott sometimes turned his thoughts to the continuation of the romance, but 'I could not find what I had already written, and was too indolent to attempt to write it anew from memory. Two circumstances in particular recalled my recollection of the mislaid manuscript. The first was the extended and well-merited fame of Miss Edgeworth.' The second was the fact that Scott completed in some fashion a romance left unfinished by Joseph Strutt, 'Queenhoo Hall.' At length, in 1814, when searching for fishing tackle, Scott found the lost manuscript, and completed the story in four weeks. All this proves conclusively—and the conclusion is worth emphasizing—that he did not take to prose fiction *because*, as he himself put it, Byron had 'bet him' in poetry.

'Waverley,' thus introduced to the world anonymously, gave its name to the wonderful series of twenty-nine works produced in the next seventeen years. The authorship, though known to some twenty private friends, and though it was long a passion of the reading world to discover it, remained a secret until 1827, when it was divulged at the 'Theatrical Fund Dinner.'

* Maria Edgeworth (1767-1849), the Irish novelist, was, like Miss Austen, Scott's predecessor in fiction. Her novels, of which 'Belinda,' 'Castle Rackrent,' and 'The Absentee' are the best, though vividly portraying Irish life and character, are partly marred by a too obtrusive moral, social, or educational purpose. 'Thus she became, in some sense, both a doctrinaire Miss Austen, and an Irish, yet prosaic, Sir Walter.' Scott praised her 'rich humour, pathetic tenderness, and admirable tact.' When staying at Abbotsford she repaid the compliment very effectively. 'You see how it is: Dean Swift said he had written his books in order that people might learn to treat him like a great lord. Sir Walter writes his in order that he may be able to treat his people as a great lord ought to do.'

Scott went almost absurd lengths in order to keep the secret, quoting from his own poetry, and apparently reviewing his own novels in the *Quarterly* on the appearance of 'Old Mortality' (1816). But in reality the latter was a double-dyed deception: he merely copied out Erskine's article for mystification, as he states himself in the Introduction to the 'Chronicles of the Canongate' (1827).

The following classification of the Waverley Novels was

made by the late Mr. T. B. Shaw: I. HISTORY.

Classified.

(i.) Scottish:—'Waverley' (the period of the Pretender's attempt in 1745), 'Legend of Montrose' (the Civil War in the 17th century), 'Old Mortality' (the rebellion of the Covenanters), 'Monastery' and 'Abbot' (the deposition and imprisonment of Mary Queen of Scots), 'Fair Maid of Perth' (the reign of Robert III.), 'Castle Dangerous' (the time of the Black Douglas). (ii.) English: 'Ivanhoe' (the return of Richard Cœur de Lion from the Holy Land), 'Kenilworth' (the reign of Elizabeth), 'Fortunes of Nigel' (reign of James I.), 'Peveril of the Peak' (reign of Charles II.; period of the pretended Catholic plot), 'Betrothed' (the wars of the Welsh Marches), 'Talisman' (the third Crusade: Richard Cœur de Lion), 'Woodstock' (the Civil War and Commonwealth). (iii.) Continental: 'Quentin Durward' (Louis XI. and Charles the Bold), 'Anne of Geierstein' (the epoch of the battle of Nancy), 'Count Robert of Paris' (the Crusaders at Byzantium). II. PRIVATE LIFE AND MIXED:—'Guy Mannering,' 'Antiquary,' 'Black Dwarf,' 'Rob Roy,' 'Heart of Midlothian,' 'Bride of Lammermoor,' 'Pirate,' 'St. Ronan's Well,' 'Redgauntlet,' 'Surgeon's Daughter,' 'Two Drovers,' 'Highland Widow.'

The idea of treating historical material in the novel was not new, as has been seen. Yet Scott is rightly
The Historical Novel. esteemed the creator of the historical novel proper, because he was the first to respect the truth of history, to convey on the whole sufficiently accurate impressions of historical events and of the social life of a particular age, while combining with these in one narrative fictitious characters and incidents. In a word, the historical novel in his hands became a genuine work of literary art, and the conditions which he imposed upon it

were accepted as the canons of that class of composition. It would be out of place here to discuss the degree of historical truth to which Scott attained.¹ It is enough to remember that he had no predecessor with whom he can even be compared, and to point out that where, in subsequent works, a far greater degree of historical accuracy has been attained, the result has usually been less pleasing, less artistic, less successful as literature and as fiction. 'In speed of production combined with variety and depth of interest, and weight and accuracy of historical substance, Scott is still unrivalled.'

The Waverley Novels owe their exalted position to two pre-eminent qualities: the truth of the characters and the harmonious development of the plots. Scott was the first to show how much the mingling of invention with historical truth can effect, when each completes and interpenetrates the other, and how much the novel may gain by the combination. This may have been at first the result of a happy chance, but even then it was a stroke of genius. Extravagant critics have placed Scott on a level with Shakespeare, as if they could be compared in depth of feeling and in creative originality; but one thing at least they had in common and in equal measure—healthiness of spirit and, consequently, dislike of all artificiality. All Scott's characters are genuinely drawn from life; they are real men and women, *not* personifications or abstractions or attempts at the solution of psychological problems masquerading in human garb. The historical personages that pass before us in his pages represent the most diverse classes and peoples,—Richard the Lion-heart and Louis XI., Cromwell and Charles the Bold, Rob Roy, Rochester, and Montrose, Cavaliers and Round-heads, pirates and astrologers, court-ladies and fortune-tellers; yet all appear real and natural, and accord so well with their surroundings, their time, and with historical tradition, that the mind of the reader is satisfied with what he feels to be, on the one hand a work of art, and on the other the essential truth of history. The clearness of

¹ The reader interested in this line of investigation is referred to W. N. Senior's 'Essays on Fiction.'

the total impression is secured by the harmonious grouping of the characters and by the due subordination of all parts to the main action. Moreover, Scott, like Shakespeare, does not generalise from the individual, but individualises the class, and thus renders his portraits, as every great artist must, true types of character. Herein lie at once the high moral and the high artistic value of his fictions. Not one of them is a moral problem, excogitated in order to prove the truth of a favourite theory; but all the teachings of life and experience are there, as in life itself, without one of them being dragged into undue prominence.

On one side Scott's genius is in kinship with Wordsworth's—in the beauty and correctness of his ^{Scott's} landscapes. descriptions, which are always in strict unison with the 'situation' in which they are introduced. The smallest details are handled with the same certainty of touch as the main outlines; hence the whole picture never fails to induce in the reader the same feeling that nature awakens in the observer (only in a different degree), whether it be the solemn stillness of old towns and dark forests, or the soft and yet majestic stillness of a lake in the Highlands. His descriptions are both rich and accurate; his outlines are sharp and clear; his landscapes have always their characteristic tone. He gives, as Wordsworth does, at once the form and the spirit of a place, but with this difference, that the poet necessarily relies more upon suggestion.

To all these excellences must be added the variety of his characters and situations, his rich multifarious knowledge, and his historical fairness. However decided Scott's political faith was, and however it led him in his other works to crude and one-sided judgments, it had not the slightest influence on the handling of his fictional material; he never alters a historical character out of love for his own views, or assigns to one a fixed tendency subservient to other than literary ends. Characters and circumstances so completely determine the development of each story, that the reader gives himself up to that delusion without which the highest delights and effects of fiction (of

whatever kind) are impossible, and follows the adventures of real men and women.

The following specimens are taken from the 'Legend of Montrose.' The first has a touch of that genial, mellow humour, which no short extract can duly illustrate but which has full play in Scott's characterisation, and shows traces of his frequent laxity in composition; in the second, his prose style appears at something like its best.

'The exterior of the castle afforded a singular scene. The Highlanders, from different islands, glens, and straths, eyed each other at a distance with looks of emulation, inquisitive curiosity, or hostile malevolence; but the most astounding part of the assembly, at least to a Lowland ear, was the rival performance of the bagpipers. These warlike minstrels, who had the highest opinion each of the superiority of his own tribe, joined to the most overweening idea of the importance connected with his profession, at first performed their various pibrochs in front each of his own clan. At length, however, as the black-cocks towards the end of the season, when, in sportman's language, they are said to flock or crowd, attracted together by the sound of each other's triumphant crow, even so did the pipers, swelling their plaids and tartans in the same triumphant manner in which the birds ruffle up their feathers, begin to approach each other within such distance as might give to their brethren a sample of their skill. Walking within a short interval, and eyeing each other with looks in which self-importance and defiance might be traced, they strutted, puffed, and plied their screaming instruments, each playing his own favourite tune with such a din, that if an Italian musician had lain buried within ten miles of them, he must have risen from the dead to run out of hearing.'

"'Kenneth," said the old outlaw, "hear the last words of the sire of thy father. A Saxon soldier and Allan of the Red-hand left this camp within these few hours, to travel to the country of Caberfae. Pursue them as the bloodhound pursues the hurt deer—swim the lake—climb the mountain—thread the forest—tarry not until you join them"; and then the countenance of the lad darkened as his grandfather spoke, and he laid his hand upon a knife which stuck in the thong of leather that confined his scanty plaid. "No!" said the old man; "it is not by thy hand he must fall. They will ask the news from the camp—say to them that Annot Lylo of the Harp is discovered to be the daughter of Duncan of Ardenvoehr; that the Thane of Monteith is to wed her before the priest; and that you are sent to bid guests to the bridal. Tarry not their answer, but vanish like the lightning when the black cloud swallows it.—And now depart, beloved son of my best beloved! I shall never more see thy face, nor hear the light sound of thy footstep—yet tarry an instant and hear my last charge. Remember the fate of our race, and quit not the

ancient manners of the Children of the Mist. We are now a struggling handful, driven from every vale by the sword of every clan, who rule in the possessions where their forefathers hewed the wood and drew the water for ours. But in the thicket of the wilderness, and in the midst of the mountain, Kenneth, son of Eracht, keep thou unsoiled the freedom which I leave thee as a birth-right. Barter it not, neither for the rich garment, nor for the stone roof, nor for the covered board, nor for the couch of down—on the rock or in the valley, in abundance or in famine—in the leafy summer and in the days of the iron winter—Son of the Mist! be free as thy forefathers. Own no lord—receive no law—take no hire—give no stipend—build no hut—enclose no pasture—sow no grain; let the deer of the mountain be thy flocks and herds—if these fail thee, prey upon the goods of our oppressors—of the Saxons, and of such Gael as are Saxons in their souls, valuing herds and flocks more than honour and freedom. Well for us that they do so—it affords the broader scope for our revenge. Remember those who have done kindness to our race, and pay their services with thy blood, should the hour require it. If a MacIain should come to thee with the head of the king's son in his hand, shelter him, though the avenging army of the father were behind him: for in Glencoe and Ardnamurchan we have dwelt in peace in the years that have gone by. The sons of Diarmid—the race of Darnlinvarach—the riders of Menteith—my curse on thy head, Child of the Mist, if thou spare one of those names when the time shall offer for cutting them off! and it will come anon, for their own swords shall devour each other, and those who are scattered shall fly to the Mist, and perish by its children. Once more, begone—shake the dust from thy feet against the habitations of men, whether banded together for peace or war. Farewell, beloved! and mayst thou die like thy forefathers, ere infirmity, disease, or age shall break thy spirit.—Begone!—begone!—live free—requite kindness—avenge the injuries of thy race!”

‘The young savage stooped and kissed the brow of his dying parent; but, accustomed from infancy to suppress every exterior sign of emotion, he parted without tear or adieu, and was soon beyond the limits of Montrose’s camp.’

Jane Austen was born in a Hampshire rectory, lived a life of quiet seclusion varied by a residence of Miss Austen, 1775-1817. about eight years amid the tepid excitements of Bath, and joined the ranks of the immortals at the age of forty-two. Of her six complete novels, ‘Pride and Prejudice,’ ‘Sense and Sensibility,’ and ‘Northanger Abbey’ were written between 1796 and 1798, when she was not more than twenty-three years old; the last three, ‘Emma,’ ‘Mansfield Park,’ and ‘Persuasion,’ were written between 1811 and 1816. She is buried in

Winchester Cathedral. Her life was passed among the gentlefolk of rural England, 'far from the madding crowd's ignoble strife'; and this society alone finds a place in her pages. For all her quiet satire on its manners and foibles, she might well be the chosen portrait-painter of her class. Her limitations are very great; in other words, her limits are very narrow; but, within those limits, she is a supreme artist. 'Northanger Abbey' is throughout a satire on the fictional method of the authoress of the 'Mysteries of Udolpho.' Elsewhere Miss Austen is content merely to depict her surroundings; without effort, but not without infinite pains and care; without romance, but not without fascination; without subtle analysis, but with abundance of playful irony. It seems impossible that the domestic novel can ever attain a greater degree of perfection.

After her death in 1817 Scott wrote of her in his diary: 'That young lady had a talent for describing the involvements, and feelings, and characters of ordinary life, which is to me the most wonderful I ever met with. The big bow-wow strain I can do myself, like anyone now going; but the exquisite touch which renders ordinary commonplace things and characters interesting, from the truth of the description and the sentiment, is denied me.' 'Never was there such exquisite manners-painting,' writes another critic; 'never was English middle-class life so delicately and truthfully rendered.' On the other hand, it must be owned that there is much truth in Charlotte Brontë's vigorous depreciation. 'Anything like warmth or enthusiasm (she says), anything onergetic, poignant, heart-felt, is utterly out of place in commending these works: all such demonstration the authoress would have met with a well-bred sneer, would have calmly scorned as *outré* and extravagant. She does her business of delineating the surface of the lives of genteel English people curiously well. There is a Chinese fidelity, a miniature delicacy, in the painting. She ruffles her reader by nothing vehement, disturbs him by nothing profound. The passions are perfectly unknown to her; she rejects even a speaking acquaintance with that stormy sisterhood. Even to the

feelings she vouchsafes no more than an occasional graceful but distant recognition—too frequent converse with them would ruffle the smooth elegance of her progress. Her business is not half so much with the human heart as with the human eyes, mouth, hands, and feet. What sees keenly, speaks aptly, moves flexibly, it suits her to study; but what throbs fast and full, though hidden, what the blood rushes through, what is the unseen seal of life and the sentient target of death—this Miss Austen ignores.' To which Miss Austen might have replied with Wordsworth, that her works should be considered as developing those features which she 'felt able as an artist to display to advantage.' Certainly we have only cause to be grateful to her for perfect works of art, free from all the objectionable characteristics of our *fin de siècle* fiction.

The following characteristic extract is from 'Pride and Prejudice.'

"Oh, Mr. Bennet, you are wanted immediately; we are all in an uproar. You must come and make Lizzy marry Mr. Collins, for she vows she will not have him; and if you do not make haste he will change his mind and not have *her*."

'Mr. Bennet raised his eyes from his book as she entered, and fixed them on her face with a calm unconcern, which was not in the least altered by her communication.'

"I have not the pleasure of understanding you," said he, when she had finished her speech. "Of what are you talking?"

"Of Mr. Collins and Lizzy. Lizzy declares she will not have Mr. Collins, and Mr. Collins begins to say that he will not have Lizzy."

"And what am I to do on the occasion? It seems a hopeless business."

"Speak to Lizzy about it yourself. Tell her that you insist upon her marrying him."

"Let her be called down. She shall hear my opinion."

'Mrs. Bennet rang the bell, and Miss Elizabeth was summoned to the library.'

"Come here, child," cried her father as she appeared. "I have sent for you on an affair of importance. I understand that Mr. Collins has made you an offer of marriage. Is it true?" Elizabeth replied that it was. "Very well—and this offer of marriage you have refused?"

"I have, Sir."

"Very well. We now come to the point. Your mother insists upon your accepting it. Is it not so, Mrs. Bennet?"

"Yes, or I will never see her again."

"An unhappy alternative is before you, Elizabeth. From this day you must be a stranger to one of your parents. Your mother will never see you again if you do *not* marry Mr. Collins, and I will never see you again if you *do*."

There is no need to draw a veil over the life of Charles Lamb, for it is as fine, in its way, as his writing. At Christ's Hospital (school of geniuses), he formed a life-long friendship with Coleridge (the 'inspired charity boy'), his senior by two years; he left the school with Leigh Hunt, and for the same reason, an impediment in his speech. He was clerk, first for a short time at the old South Sea House, and then at the India House, whence he retired in 1825, after thirty-three years' service, with a liberal pension. In one way Lamb's life was a prolonged tragedy. When, in 1796, his sister Mary, his collaborator in the 'Tales from Shakespeare' (1807), killed their invalid mother in a moment of maniacal frenzy, Charles gave up all thoughts of marriage and devoted the remainder of his life to a companionship unique in the history of English letters, one from which the element of pathos was never absent, and that of tragedy seldom. For the fits of insanity, returning at intervals, cast their dark shadow over both their lives, his certainly not less than hers. The lovable disposition of 'my gentle-hearted Charles,' combined with his growing fame, attracted to their humble home better society (on the authority of Crabb Robinson's 'Diary') than could be met anywhere else in London. The death of Coleridge in 1834 weighed on Lamb's spirits terribly; 'his great and dear spirit haunts me,' he wrote; and he was frequently heard to exclaim, 'Coleridge is dead!' At the close of the same year he followed his friend. Scott and Crabbe had died in 1832, Coleridge and Lamb died in 1834, Mrs. Hemans and Hogg in 1835. In his 'Effusion' upon the death of the last-named, Wordsworth wrote:

'The rapt One, of the godlike forehead,
The heaven-eyed creature sleeps in earth :
And Lamb, the frolic and the gentle,
Has vanished from his lonely hearth.'

And in his lines 'Written after the death of Charles Lamb' he had said :

'Oh, he was good, if e'er a good man lived !'

Lamb himself, in a sonnet on 'The Family Name,' had written :

'No deed of mine shall shame thee, gentle name,'

and we may take Wordsworth's testimony for it, that he kept his word.

With his poetry and his attempts at drama—seated in ^{His prose} the front row of the pit he was one of the ^{works.} loudest in hissing his own farce of 'Mr. H.' off the stage—we have nothing to do here, nor would Lamb's fame be either heightened or lessened by their inclusion. 'The Tales from Shakespeare,' of which the tragedies are Charles's share, led to his being asked to edit a volume of 'Specimens of English Dramatic Poets contemporary with Shakespeare' (1808), an undertaking for which no living man of letters was equally well qualified. Lamb brought to the task a mind free from all prudishness because perfectly pure; a critical acumen hardly less than Coleridge's, an insight equal to Hazlitt's, and a sympathy, at times amounting to reverence, that was peculiarly his own. 'Barry Cornwall' said that Lamb 'had more real knowledge of old English literature than any man whom I ever knew. . . . The spirit of his author descended upon him, and he felt it!' 'If in deeper or more superficial sense,' writes Pater, 'the dead *do* care at all for their name and fame, then how must the souls of Shakespeare and Webster have been stirred, after so long converse with things that stopped their ears, whether above or below the soil, at his exquisite appreciations of them.'

Not until 1820, in the pages of the *London Magazine*, ^{The 'Essays} the 'alma mater' also of De Quincey's 'Opium-^{of Elia.'} Eater,' did the first of those 'Essays of Elia' appear which have made Lamb's name immortal. 'The adoption of the signature,' says Talfourd, 'was purely accidental. His first contribution was a description of the old South Sea House, where Lamb had passed a few months' noviciate as a clerk thirty years before, and of its inmates,

who had long passed away; and remembering the name of a gay, light-hearted foreigner, who fluttered there at that time, he subscribed his name to the essay.' In these essays we have Lamb at his best, the successor and the equal of Sir Thomas Browne and Addison and Goldsmith. Their flavour is of the most delicate; like 'Lycidas' in poetry, they may be taken as the touchstone of taste; to the literary 'gourmet' their value increases with years. 'The style has a peculiar and most subtle charm; not the result of labour, for it is found in as great perfection in his familiar talk; a certain quaintness and antiquity, not affected in Lamb, but the natural garb of his thoughts.' The style was natural to the man. In his essay on 'The Old and the New Schoolmaster,' he says, with his delightful humour: 'One of these professors, upon my complaining that these little sketches of mine were anything but methodical, and that I was unable to make them otherwise, kindly offered to instruct me in the method by which young gentlemen in his seminary were taught to compose English themes.' 'I was unable to make them otherwise'—fortunately. It is always the same Lamb, the same humorous pathos and pathetic humour, 'a sweet stream of thought bubbling and sparkling with witty fancies,' whether in familiar talk, or in his letters, or in the essays.

'Thou wert a scorner of the fields, my friend,
But more in show than truth.'

Yes, London, the London of a generation earlier than Dickens's, is Lamb's constant theme; he is her great prose-poet.

Our two short extracts are taken from the 'Specimens' and the 'Essays' respectively.

ON WEBSTER'S 'DUCHESS OF MALFI.'

'To move a horror skilfully, to touch a soul to the quick, to lay upon fear as much as it can bear, to wean and weary a life till it is ready to drop, and then stop in with mortal instruments to take its last forfeit—this only a Webster can do. Writers of an inferior genius may "upon horror's head horrors accumulate," but they cannot do this. They mistake quantity for quality, they "terrify babes with

painted devils," but they know not how a soul is capable of being moved; their terrors want dignity, their affrightments are without decorum.'

MRS. BATTLE'S OPINIONS ON WHIST.

"A clear fire, a clean hearth, and the rigour of the game." This was the celebrated *wish* of old Sarah Battle (now with God), who, next to her devotions, loved a good game of whist. She was none of your luke-warm gamesters, your half-and-half players, who have no objection to take a hand, if you want one to make a rubber; who affirm that they have no pleasure in winning; that they like to win one game and lose another; that they can while away an hour very agreeably at a card-table, but are indifferent whether they play or no; and will desire an adversary who has slipped a wrong card to take it up and play another. These insufferable triflers are the curse of a table. One of these flies will spoil a whole pot. Of such it may be said that they do not play at cards, but only play at playing at them.

'Sarah Battle was none of that breed. She detested them, as I do, from her heart and soul, and would not, save upon a striking emergency, willingly seat herself at the same table with them. She loved a thorough-paced partner, a determined enemy. She took and gave no concessions. She hated favours. She never made a revoke, nor ever passed it over in her adversary without exacting the utmost forfeiture. She fought a good fight, cut and thrust. She held not her good sword (her cards) "like a dancer." She sat bolt upright, and never showed you her cards nor desired to see yours. All people have their blind side—their superstitions; and I have heard her declare, under the rose, that hearts was her favourite suit.

'I never in my life—and I knew Sarah Battle many of the best years of it—saw her take out her snuff-box when it was her turn to play, or snuff a candle in the middle of a game, or ring for a servant till it was fairly over. She never introduced or connived at miscellaneous conversation during its process. As she emphatically observed, cards were cards; and if I ever saw unmingled distaste in her fine last century countenance, it was at the airs of a young gentleman of a literary turn, who had been with difficulty persuaded to take a hand, and who, in his excess of candour, declared that he thought there was no harm in unbending the mind now and then, after serious studies, in recreations of that kind! She could not bear to have her noble occupation, to which she wound up her faculties, considered in that light. It was her business, her duty, the thing she came into the world to do,—and she did it. She unbent her mind afterwards over a book.'

William Hazlitt has already been classed with Coleridge and Lamb as our greatest English critics. He was more of a professional critic (in no offensive sense) than either of his confrères, and stands easily 'princeps' in his class. If we make due allowance for the

Hazlitt,
1778-1830.

differences between English and French modes of criticism—the greatest of which is that the Frenchman criticises by method and system, while the Englishman relies mainly on sympathetic intuition—Hazlitt is our English Sainte-Beuve. He was late in finding out, if not his powers, at least their true bent; he was later still (1814) in finding a means of making them felt in the pages of the *Edinburgh Review*. His great critical works are ‘Characters of Shakespeare’s Plays’ (1817), ‘Lectures on the English Poets’ (1818), ‘Lectures on the English Comic Writers’ (1819), ‘Lectures on the Dramatic Literature of the Reign of Elizabeth’ (1821), ‘The Spirit of the Age’ (1825). The last-named, a depreciatory portraiture and criticism of his contemporaries, shows Hazlitt’s incisive style at its best, but as criticism is not comparable with the other four works. In the ‘Poets,’ ‘for the first time, a critic of the highest rank took stock of the poetic achievements of England.’ One thing is certain, that Hazlitt does not receive his due of recognition from the reading public of to-day. The following extract is from the final lecture ‘On the Living Poets.’

‘But I may say of him [Coleridge] here, that he is the only person I ever knew who answered to the idea of a man of genius. He is the only person from whom I ever learnt anything. There is only one thing he could learn from me in return, but *that* he has not. He was the first poet I ever knew. His genius at that time [1798] had angelic wings, and fed on manna. He talked on for ever. His thoughts did not seem to come with labour and effort, but as if borne on the gusts of genius, and as if the wings of his imagination lifted him from off his feet. His voice rolled on the ear like the pealing organ, and its sound alone was the music of thought. His mind was clothed with wings; and, raised on them, he lifted philosophy to heaven. In his descriptions, you then saw the progress of human happiness and liberty in bright and never-ending succession, like the steps of Jacob’s Ladder, with airy shapes ascending and descending, and with the voice of God at the top of the ladder. And shall I, who heard him then, listen to him now? Not I! That spell is broken; the time is gone for ever; that voice is heard no more; but still the recollection comes rushing by with thoughts of long-past years, and rings in my ears with never-dying sound.’

Thomas De Quincey, like Lamb and Hazlitt, found his public, if not the real bent of his genius, through the periodical publications (never so important either before or since) of that day. His ‘Confessions of

an English Opium-Eater' appeared in the *London Magazine* in 1821; after that he transferred his contributions to *Blackwood*, then edited by his friend 'Christopher North.' De Quincey was known in Edinburgh—he is buried there in the West Churchyard—as the 'English Opium-Eater.' Carlyle said: 'Look at him—this child has been in Hell.' Before and after his marriage in 1816, his daily dose of opium was what was said to be enough to kill forty men. Yet he lived to the age of seventy-four. His life was that of an eccentric nomadic genius; he lived in one set of rooms till he was nearly 'snowed up' with manuscript, and then fittit to another. Of the quality and permanent value of his work the most divergent estimates have been formed. To one he is 'Thomas de Sawdust'; to another he is the prince of English prosaists—but whoever exalts him to this position must lay much more store by the form than the substance of prose. He may be regarded as a literary blend of Jeremy Taylor and Coleridge (with the latter of whom he has several bands of affinity), uniting something of the eloquence of the one with the philosophical subtlety and 'faery' imagination of the other. He claimed to be the creator of the 'prose of impassioned reverie,' and prided himself that there was no such writing in the English language as his 'Opium-Eater.' But his thought is too often unworthy of its elaborate and stately garb.

ON THE KNOCKING AT THE GATE IN MACBETH.

'Here, as I have said, the retiring of the human heart, and the entrance of the fiendish heart was to be expressed and made sensible. Another world has stepped in, and the murderers are taken out of the region of human things, human purposes, human desires. They are transfigured. Lady Macbeth is "unsexed"; Macbeth forgot that he was born of woman; both are conformed to the image of devils; and the world of devils is suddenly revealed. But how should this be conveyed and made palpable? In order that a new world may step in, this world must for a time disappear. The murderers and the murder must be insulated—cut off by an immeasurable gulf from the ordinary tide and succession of human affairs—locked up and sequestered in some deep recess; we must be made sensible that the world of ordinary life is suddenly arrested—laid asleep—tranced—racked into a dread armistice; time must be annihilated; relation to things without abolished; and all must pass self-withdrawn into a deep syncope and

suspension of earthly passion. Hence it is that when the deed is done, when the work of darkness is perfect, then the world of darkness passes away like a pageantry in the clouds; the knocking at the gate is heard; and it makes known audibly that the reaction has commenced; the human has made its reflex upon the fiendish; the pulses of life are beginning to beat again; and the re-establishment of the goings-on of the world in which we live—first makes us profoundly sensible of the awful parenthesis that had suspended them.

William Cobbett is a unique personality in English letters. An uneducated peasant's son, self-taught and self-made, he became a really great power in English politics, and the wielder of one of the most distinctive and virile prose styles that our literature can boast. It cannot be said of him that 'consistency still was a part of his plan'; 'few publicists have contradicted themselves so flatly and so often'; and it may be added that never was a man so unabashed or so unchecked by the exposure of his inconsistencies. Like Leigh Hunt, he served two years in prison for political journalism, but nothing daunted him. *Cobbett's Weekly Political Register* ran from 1802 till his death in 1835, and for a great part of that time was the leading journal on the side of parliamentary reform. Its editor sat in the first reformed parliament as M.P. for Oldham. In 1803 he began 'The Parliamentary Debates' which nine years later passed into Hansard's hands. He wrote an Anti-Protestant 'History of the Reformation' (1824-7), which has often been translated into foreign languages, but which is partly vitiated by, what Hazlitt called, the writer's 'pugnacious disposition, that must have an antagonist power to contend with, and only finds itself at ease in systematic opposition.' His greatest work, to present-day readers at least, is his 'Rural Rides' (1830), a collection of papers contributed to his *Register*, giving graphic and picturesque accounts of a series of political tours on horseback throughout the country. Of the style of this successor of Latimer, Bunyan, and Defoe, the following extract will give some idea.

'What need had we of schools? What need of teachers? What need of scolding and force to induce children to read, write, and love books? What need of cards, dice, or of any games, to "kill time"; but, in fact, to implant in the infant heart a love of gaming, one of

the most destructive of all human vices? We did not want to "kill time"; we were always busy, wet weather or dry weather, winter or summer. There was no force in any case; no command, no authority; none of these was ever wanted. To teach the children the habit of early rising was a great object; and every one knows how young people cling to their beds, and how loath they are to go to those beds. This was a capital matter; because here were industry and health both at stake. Yet I avoided command even here; and merely offered a reward. The child that was downstairs first was called the lark for that day; and, further, sat at my right hand at dinner. They soon discovered that to rise early they must go to bed early, and thus was this most important object secured, with regard to girls as well as boys.'

'Poetry was always my amusement, prose my study and business,' wrote Landor, of whose 'amusement' something has already been said. His audience is fewer, Landor. if not fitter, than Milton's. Many good judges rank his prose above his poetry. One of them says: 'He manages language literally as a great musician manages the human voice or some other organ of sound. The thought is at best sufficient, and it very frequently is that; but it seldom makes any tax upon even the most moderate understanding, and it never by any chance averts attention from the beauty and finish of the vesture in which it is clothed. The famous dreams which close "The Pentameron" are things of which it is almost impossible to tire. Nowhere else perhaps in English does prose style, while never trespassing into that which is not prose, accompany itself with such an exquisite harmony of varied sound; nowhere is there such a complicated and yet such an easily appreciable scheme of verbal music.' Here are a few sentences in illustration.

'I cannot tell how I knew him, but I knew him to be the genius of Death. Breathless as I was at beholding him, I soon became familiar with his features. First they seemed only calm; presently they grew contemplative; and lastly, beautiful: those of the graces themselves are less regular, less harmonious, less composed. Love glanced at him unsteadily, with a countenance in which there was somewhat of anxiety, somewhat of disdain; and cried, "Go away! go away! nothing that thou touchest, lives."

"Say rather, child!" replied the advancing form, and advancing grew loftier and statelier. "Say rather that nothing of beautiful or of glorious lives its own true life until my wing hath passed over it,"'

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- JEWEL, John, Bishop of Salisbury (1522-71). *Apologia Ecclesiae Anglicanae* (1562), *A Defence of the Apology, Sermons*, etc.
- JOHNSON, Samuel (1709-1784). His poems are *London* (1738), and the *Vanity of Human Wishes* (1749); his play *Irene* was acted in 1749—written much earlier; his novel *Rasselas* appeared in 1759. Among his prose works are *Translation of Lobo's Voyage to Abyssinia* (1735), *Life of Savage* (1714), *The Rambler* (1750-1752), *Dictionary of the English Language* (finished in 1755), *The Idler* (1758-1760), *Edition of Shakespeare* (1765), *Taxation no Tyranny* (1775), *Journey to the Western Islands of Scotland* (1775), *Lives of the Poets* (1778-1781) 354, 422, 424, 446, 512, 521, 525
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- MACAULAY, Thomas Babington, Lord (1800-1859). *Milton* (1825, in *Edinburgh Review*).
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- MANLEY, Mrs. de la Rivière (1672-1724), a writer of plays. *The Royal Mischief* (1696), *The Lover Lost* (1696), etc., and scurrilous *Novels, Memoirs, etc.* Her most famous production is a scandalous *New Atlantis* (1709). Her *Adventures of Rivella* is her own autobiography. *Memoirs of Court Intrigues*, and any number of personal improper pamphlets, came from her pen. She claims notice, with Bunyan and Mrs. Behn, as a writer of fiction before Defoe.
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- MILTON, John (1608-1674). *Ode to the Nativity* (1629), *L' Allegro* (1633), *Il Penseroso* (1633), *Arcades* (1633), *Comus* (acted 1634), *Lycidas* (1638), *Of Prelatical Episcopacy* (1641), *Reason of Church Government urged against Episcopacy* (1641), *An Apology for Smectymnus* (1642), *Tractate on Education* (1644), *Areopagitica* (1644), *The Doctrine and Discipline of Divorce* (1644), *Tetrachordon* (1645), *Colasterion* (1645), *Poems both Latin and English* (1645), *Eikonoklastes* (1649), *Defensio pro Populo Anglicano* (1651), *Defensio Secunda* (1654), *Pro se Defensio contra Morum* (1655), *Treatise of Civil Power in Ecclesiastical Causes* (1659), *Considerations touching the means of removing Hirelings out of the Church* (1659), *Ready and Easy way to Establish a Free Commonwealth* (1660), *Paradise Lost* (1667), *History of Britain* (1670), *Paradise Regained and Samson Agonistes* (1671), *De Doctrina Christiana* . . . 308, 353
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- MONTAGU, Lady Mary Wortley (1689-1762). *Twon Eclogues* (1716), and various poems. Her *Letters* were published in 1763 429
- MONTAGUE, Charles, Earl of Halifax (1661-1715), joined with PRIOR in writing *The Town Mouse and the Country Mouse* (1687) 440
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- MONTGOMERY, Robert ('Satan') (1807-1855). *Omnipresence of the Deity* (1828), *Satan* (1830), *The Messiah* (1832).
- MOORE, Edward (1712-1757). *The Foundling* (1748), *The Gamester* (1753), etc. 482
- MOORE, Thomas (1779-1852). *Odes of Anacreon* (1800), *Poetical Works of Thomas Little* (1801), *Odes and Epistles* (1806), *Irish Melodies* (1807-34), *Twopenny Postbag* (1812), *Sacred Songs* (1816), *Lalla Rookh* (1817), *Fudge Family in Paris* (1818), *Rhymes on the Road* (1819), *Fables for the Holy Alliance* (1823), *Loves of the Angels* (1823), *Life of Sheridan* (1825), *The Epicurean* (1827), *Odes upon Cash, Corn, and Catholics* (1828), *Life of Byron* (1830) 592
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- MORE, Henry (1614-1687). *Psychodia Platonica* (1642), *Philosophical Poems* (1647), *Conjectura Cabbalistica* (1653), *Immortality of the Soul* (1659) 291
- MORE, Sir Thomas (1480-1535). *Utopia*, written in Latin (1516); *History of the Life and Death of Edward V. and of Richard III.* (before 1509); *Dialogue concerning Heresies* (1529); *Confutation of Tyndale's Answer*, and many other controversial works 172
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- MULGRAVE, John Sheffield, Earl of, afterwards Duke of Buckinghamshire (1649-1721). *Essay on Satire* [in which DRYDEN assisted] (1679), *Essay on Poetry* (1682); also wrote plays (*Julius Caesar*, etc.), and a number of miscellaneous pieces in verse (e.g. *The Vision*) and prose 358, 366, 389
- MUNDAY, Anthony (d. 1633). Minor poet and prose writer and playwright: contributor to *A Gorgeous Gallery of Gallant Inventions* 161
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PHILIPS, John (1676-1708). <i>The Splendid Shilling</i> (in blank verse; published in 1705, but partly written earlier), <i>Cyder</i> (also in blank verse, 1706), <i>Blenheim</i> (blank verse, 1705).	
PHILIPS, Katherine (1631-1664). A volume of this lady's verses was published posthumously. They are of no great merit, though they received considerable praise in their time, as the poems of "the matchless Orinda."	
<i>Piers the Plowman</i> (1362, 1377, 1398?)	

- PICCOLI, Hester Lynch, formerly Mrs. Thrale (1739-1821).
Anecdotes of Dr. Johnson (1786), *Letters to and from Dr. Johnson* (1788).
- POLLOCK, Robert (1799-1827). *The Course of Time* (1827).
- POMFRET, Rev. John (1667-1703), wrote several poems, of which
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- POON, Richard, Bishop (d. 4237) 25
- POPE, Alexander (1688-1744). *Pastorals* (1709), *January and May* (1709), *Essay on Criticism* (1711), *The Rape of the Lock* (1712), *The Messiah* (1712), *Translation of Statius' Thebais, Book I.* (1712), *Prologue to Cato* (1713), *Windsor Forest* (1713), *Ode on St. Cecilia's Day* (1713), *The Temple of Fame* (1714), *The Rape of the Lock*, in enlarged and final form (1714), *The Wife of Bath* (1714), *Translation of the Iliad* (1715-1720), *Elegy to the Memory of an Unfortunate Lady* (1717), *Epistle from Eloisa to Abelard* (1717), *Translation of the Odyssey* (1723-1725), *Edition of Shakespeare* (1725), *Treatise on the Bathos* (1727), *The Dunciad* (1728), with *Book II.* (1742), with Cibber as hero (1743), *Essay on Man* (1732-1734), *Moral Essays* (1732-1735), *Imitations of Horace* (1733-1737), *Epistle to Arbuthnot* (1735), *The Satires of Dr. Donne Versified* (1735), *Epilogue to the Satires* (1735). 425, 541
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- PRICE, Richard (1723-1791). *A Review of the Principal Questions and Difficulties in Morals* (1758), *Civil Liberty* (1776) 535
- PRIESTLEY, Joseph (1733-1804). *Experiments on Air* (1774-1779), *Disquisitions relating to Matter and Spirit* (1777), *History of the Corruptions of Christianity* (1782).
- PRIOR, Matthew (1664-1721). *City and Country Mouse* [with HALIFAX] (1687), *Ode on the Taking of Namur* (1695), *Carmen Seculare* (1700), *Alma and Solomon* (1718), and many very beautiful occasional pieces and 'society' verses at various times (collected in 1709 and 1718) 415, 110
- PROCTER, Bryan Waller ("Barry Cornwall") (1787-1874). *A Sicilian Story* (1820), *Mirandula* (1821), *Flood of Treachery* (1822), *English Songs* (1832).

- PROCTOR, Thomas, Compiler of *A Gorgeous Gallery of Gallant Inventions* (1578) 161
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- RALEIGH, Sir Walter (1552-1618). *The Fight about the Isles of the Azores* (1591), *The Discovery of the Empire of Guiana* (1596), *A History of the World* (1614), and some poems . . 334
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- RAMSAY, Allan (1685-1758). *Scots Songs* (1719), *Tea-Table Miscellany* (1724), *The Gentle Shepherd* (1725), etc. . . 417, 443
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- RAY, John (1628-1705). *Collection of Proverbs* (1672), *History of Fishes* (1686), *Historia Plantarum* (1686), *The Wisdom of God Manifested in Creation* (1691), *Physico-Theological Discourses concerning Chaos, the Deluge, and the Dissolution of the World* (1693) 401
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- REID, Thomas (1710-1796). *An Inquiry into the Human Mind on the Principles of Common Sense* (1763), *Essays on the Intellectual Powers of Man* (1785), *Essays on the Active Powers of the Human Mind* (1788) 424, 536
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- RICARDO, David (1772-1823). *High Price of Bullion* (1809), *Principles of Political Economy* (1817).
- RICHARDSON, Samuel (1689-1761). *Pamela; or, Virtue Rewarded* (1740), *Clarissa Harlowe* (1748), *Sir Charles Grandison* (1753) 500
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- ROBINSON, Clement. Edited a "Miscellany" entitled *A Handful of Pleasant Delights* (1584).
- ROBINSON, Ralph. Made a translation of More's *Utopia* (1551) . 173
- ROCHESTER, John Wilmot, Earl of (1647-1680). Various metrical pieces, including the famous lines on *Nothing, The Trial of the Poets for the Bayes*, also a tragedy, *Valentinian*, etc. 366, 391
- ROGERS, John (d. 1555). Edited the version of Coverdale's translation, known as *Matthew's Bible* (1537) 178
- ROGERS, Samuel (1763-1855). *Poems* (1786), *The Pleasures of Memory* (1792), *Columbus* (1812), *Jacqueline* (1814), *Human Life* (1819), *Italy* (1822-8) 480, 593
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- ROSCOMMON, Wentworth Dillon, Earl of (1633-1684). *Essay on Translated Verse* (1680), and *Translations of Horace, Vergil*, etc. 389
- ROWE, Nicholas (1673-1718). The chief of his plays are *Tamerlane* (1702), *The Fair Penitent* (1703), *The Royal Convert* (1708), *Jane Shore* (1714) 396
- ROWLEY, Samuel. Minor Playright 255
- ROWLEY, William. Minor Playwright 255
- ROY, William. A helper of Tyndale in his translation of the *New Testament* (1525), and writer of various satires in rough verse, e.g. *The Burying of the Mass* (1528) 132

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SELDEN, John (1584-1654). <i>The Duello</i> (1610), <i>Titles of Honour</i> (1614), etc. His most famous work, the <i>Table Talk</i> , was not published till 1689	348
SETTLE, Elkanah (1648-1724), playwright, etc. <i>Empress of Morocco</i> (1673), etc.	360, 367, 377
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- SHAFTESBURY, Anthony Ashley Cooper, 3rd Earl of (1671-1713), a writer of miscellaneous prose. His *Characteristics of Men, Manners, and Opinions* is a collection of *Essays and Letters on Enthusiasm, Common-Sense, Advice to an Author, Inquiry concerning Virtue*, etc. 'His most attractive literary quality' has been declared (by Mr. Gosse) to be 'the serene stateliness of his style.' Gray, on the other hand, asserts that 'he was as vain as any of his readers....and seems always to mean more than he had said.'
- SHAKESPEARE, William (1564-1616). The list of his plays and poems with approximate dates is given on pp. 213-4 . . . 212
- SHELLEY, Mary (1797-1851). *Frankenstein* (1817), *Valperga* (1823), *Perkin Warbeck* (1830).
- SHELLEY, Percy Bysshe (1792-1822). *Zastrozzi* (1810), *Necessity of Atheism* (1811), *Address to the Irish People* (1812), *Queen Mab* (1813), *Vindication of Natural Diet* (1813), *Alastor* (1816), *Revolt of Islam* (1818), *Julian and Maddalo* (written 1818), *Rosalind and Helen* (1819), *Lines written among the Euganean Hills* (1819), *The Cenci* (1819), *Peter Bell the Third* (1819), *Œdipus Tyrannus* (1820), *Witch of Atlas* (1820), *Prometheus Unbound* (1820), *Epipsychidion* (1821), *Adonais* (1821), *Hellas* (1822), *Posthumous Poems* (1824), *Masque of Anarchy* (1832) 553, 575
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- SHERLOCK, Dr. William (1611-1707). *Practical Discourse concerning Death* (1689), *Vindication of the Doctrine of the Trinity* (1691), *Practical Discourse concerning Future Judgment* (1692). 411
- SHIRLEY, James (1596-1666). *Lore's Tricks* (1631), *The Traitor* (1637), *The Maid's Revenge* (1639), *The Cardinal* (1652), and many other plays 260
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